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THE CHIVALRY OF
KEITH LEICESTER
ROBERT ALLISON HOOD

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THE CHIVALRY OF KEITH LEICESTER

ROBERT ALLISON HOOD

THE CHIVALRY OF KEITH LEICESTER

A Romance of British Columbia

BY

ROBERT ALLISON HOOD

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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By George H. Doran Company

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TO

MY MOTHER

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FOREWORD

Fair Tempe's groves 'neath Grecian skies
With shout and song re-echo still;
And dancing nymphs and fauns surprise
By rocky grot and foaming rill;
While Pan's illusive pipings fill
The leafy lanes—jocund appear
His whole bright frolic crew at will—
To such as have the vision clear.

Birthplace of chivalrous emprise,
Fair France, thy war-scarred terrain still
Is quaintly thronged to seeing eyes;
And such may yet descry at will
Some Roland richly armed fulfil
His devoir or some Chandos, dear
To story, hold the lists with skill—
If one but have the vision clear.

To mortals blest with seeing eyes,
The fairies walk in Arden still;
The magic light of Elfland lies
On grassy glades, on dale and hill;
While Philomel's sweet love-notes fill
The leafy bowers where gay appear
Titania's court in costume chill—
To such as have the vision clear.

Far out beneath these Western skies,
We, too, may conjure up at will,
These sylph-like forms—perchance surprise
Some naiad mirrored in the rill;
Or through the pine-trees, sweet but shrill
Pan's plaintive pipes enchanted hear—
E'en fairies dance and roundels trill—
For such as have the vision clear.

ENVOY

Reader, herein a truth there lies
That will to you, at once, appear;
For you are blest with seeing eyes—
We know you have the vision clear.

THE CHIVALRY OF KEITH LEICESTER

THE CHIVALRY OF KEITH LEICESTER

CHAPTER I

I swing to the sunset land—
The world of prairie, the world of plain
The world of promise and hope and gain
The world of gold and the world of grain
And the world of the willing hand.

PAULINE JOHNSON.

KEITH LEICESTER had just tied up his team by the store, where he had come after a hard day's work, to get some groceries, and his mail, when the distant roar of the train made him turn and stroll down to the little flag station, with its rough shed, which was all the accommodation that the C. P. R. considered necessary for the few passengers that got on and off there. Living lonely in the woods, as he did, the mere sight of a train never failed to bring him a sensation of pleasure. The railway, to the rancher, is the bond of communication that links him with the cities, the great nerve-centres of the world, that seem often invested with such a wondrous glamour to those whose lot lies outside of them. Keith, himself, was well enough acquainted with them to have no such illusions, but, nevertheless, he always enjoyed the little thrill of the romantic, that the sight of the passing transcontinental brought into his rather uneventful existence. He knew there were ten chances to one that the train

would not stop, but to see her flying through, and to catch the whiff of her breath, would be reward sufficient for the slight delay that it would cost him.

Only old Jim, the store-keeper down to receive his mail-sacks, was at the station.

"It's the Imperial Limited, Jim, is it?" he asked, answering the old man's cheery hail.

"Ay," he replied, "an' she's an hour an' a half late; some accident up the line may be. Like enough there be some washout after them heavy rains."

She made a brave sight as she came round the curve of the track with her head-light gleaming, and the heavy column of black smoke streaming out to the side of her, over the sluggish Fraser that lay an opalescent sheet of pink and silver under the sunset glow. She whistled shrilly, and then the puff of her engines ceased abruptly as the engineer put off steam.

"She's going to stop after all, though," said Jim. "Must be some one gettin' off."

With brakes grinding heavily and sparks flying from the wheels, she thundered in, and the conductor assisted one lone lady to alight, and handed down her wrap and bag. From the baggage car, a big trunk was hastily thrown out, the conductor whistled, the engine bell began to ring, and, in a moment or two, the train was off again.

The woman, or rather girl, for she did not look to be more than twenty, seemed surprised as she looked around, and saw the half-deserted little station; and she peered anxiously about, as if she had expected some one to meet her.

"Are you the station-master?" she asked of old Jim, who had gathered up his mail-sacks, and was gazing at her curiously.

"Station-agent, ma'am? Why, there ain't no station-agent at Brayton," he answered with an odd inflection of his voice, as of one resenting an unfair aspersion. "There's one at Portlake, though, two miles farther west. This is only a flag-station."

"I was expecting Mr. Bolton to meet me, but the train is several hours late," said the girl, her voice betraying her perplexity.

"Are you the young woman he was expecting? Why then, ma'am, he wasn't looking for you till to-morrow. He was down at the store on Saturday and he told me so."

"But I telegraphed him that I was coming a day earlier. I telegraphed him the day before yesterday."

"Ah, well, then be sure he never got it, for he ain't been down to-day, and they wouldn't send it out to him. Why, it's four miles to his place, an' the road—well, it's the newest and the roughest of all the roads hereabouts, an' that's sayin' a good deal I can tell you"; and Jim spat emphatically to clinch his assertion.

"But what am I to do then? Is there no one I could get to drive me out to his farm?"

Keith, alas, was a misogynist, or at least thought he was, and had no desire to play squire to distressed damsels; so he turned away, and walked up to the store, fearing that he might be called upon to take the girl to her destination. He remembered, however, that he had some ploughshares to leave at the blacksmith's house to be sharpened, on the morrow. When he returned from doing this, and had entered the store, he found old Jim and the girl were there before him, and the two were holding an anxious conference in the rear. The latter spoke low but the store-keeper's voice with its harsh, resonant drawl filled the whole place, so that Keith could not help hearing what he said.

"Yes, yes, it's too bad, miss," the old man was saying soothingly; "but ye see, there ain't no hotel in this here little place—ain't no need for it, in fact."

"No, there ain't no one handy that I know on, what could take you up to-night," he continued after she had spoken. "Gus Oleson went down to Portlake an' he won't be back till late—like as not, he'll be drunk by then, too. Al Snider might have gone—he's my next neighbour here—but Al's sick in bed, poor fellow—down with this here grippe, I guess. I'd ha' put you up here all night, only my wife's brother and his family are staying with us and we're all doubled up as it is. Gosh! there's Mr. Leicester though, I never thought of him."

The old man came forward to the counter.

"Her name's Miss Coon," he said to Keith, in what was the nearest approach to an undertone that was possible to him, "an' I think she must be the hired girl that Bolton was talking about gettin' that last time he was in. His wife's been kind o' poorly this while back. I shouldn't think that little thing would be much good on a ranch. She ain't over stout, I should say. However, Bolton ought to know what he's getting. The poor girl's tired I guess. 'Pears to be a bit upset about Bolton not meeting her. What with the wife's mother and brother being here just now, we hain't really a place to put her; an' there ain't no place else nearby where she could go. Couldn't you take her up with you, Mr. Leicester, and Mrs. Dalrymple, your housekeeper, could fix her up for the night. She could walk through across the creek to Bolton's in the morning? It ain't but a step from your place thataway, though it is such a longish bit by road."

"Oh get along, Jim; I don't want her with me, man," said Keith irritably. "Let Bolton look after his own hired girl; or send little Jim up with her in the buggy."

"I'm afeared to send little Jim, that mare is such a fool; and the roads are so muddy, too. You know what it'd be like going up that hill to Bolton's in the daylight now, let alone in the dark. They'd like as not go over the grade, buggy, and all, in them dark canyons."

"Oh well," Keith assented with none too good a grace, "I'll take her up with me. Mrs. Dalrymple can put her up, I dare say, for the night; and we'll be rid of her in the morning. What did you say her name was?"

"Miss Coon, it sounded like."

Keith went over to where she sat.

"Well, Miss Coon," he said, perhaps a little ungraciously, "Jim here has been telling me about the plight you're in. Seeing there appears to be no one else to do it, I suppose I must step into the breach and take you up with me. My place isn't far from Bolton's."

She looked up at him and hesitated for a moment.

"I shall be very grateful, I'm sure," she said with a smile. "I am sorry to put you to the trouble but I had no idea that I would find no one here to meet me."

"I'll take your bag and Jim here will look after your trunk till Bolton comes down for it. I suppose we had better be going and get all the daylight there is left"; and he led the way out to where the team was standing, the girl following meekly with old Jim.

CHAPTER II

Black as your hat was the night, and never a star in the heavens.
Thundering down the grade, the gravel and stones we sent flying
Over the precipice side—a thousand feet plumb to the bottom.
BRET HARTE.

SHE climbed up after him into the high democrat and the horses, cold with standing, started off at a brisk trot. There was a chill in the air as the sun had now gone down and the sky was black with heavy clouds which had been rolling up from the east. The frogs had already begun their evening concert in the ditches. Before them to the North, the mountains showed a dark blue against the still luminous sky; and the scattered farm houses on either side began to show out their lights. Under the horses' feet the roads were deep with sticky mud; and they were soon fain to change their trot to a steady plodding walk.

They drove along for some time in silence. Keith was not inclined to exert himself to make conversation and his companion appeared either too tired or too shy to begin. His ill-humour, however, was not lasting and he began to feel he ought to say something at least, to make her feel at her ease. She was just a young girl and might well feel lonesome set down in a place like Brayton, an utter stranger.

"Have you come far on the cars to-day?" he asked at last.

"I left Montreal Sunday night," she answered; "and it has been rather a tiring trip. I never travelled more

than a day on the train at one time before. I have just come over from England you see, and it is all rather strange over here. Then I was awfully sea-sick."

"Bolton told me he had hired a girl to come and help him for a while but he did not say she was coming all the way from England. I suppose he must have known you in the old country before he engaged you," he speculated with a polite air of interest.

"Oh——" she began to speak but stopped suddenly with a faint laugh. "Yes, he has known me a long time," she concluded after a slight hesitation.

"Well, I hope you will like your place," he said in a friendly if somewhat patronising tone; "it will be a great change from service at home you will find. Ranch life in British Columbia is not an easy one either for the men or the women. However, of course, the pay is better out here."

She made no answer to this. Her accent was rather pleasing, Keith reflected; though he was aware that this was not an uncommon thing in the better class of English servant. It was so different from that of the women around the country-side or from that of his own house-keeper that the contrast gave him a curious sensation of pleasure.

"I hope the Boltons will be at home," she said anxiously. "It would be a sad mishap if we found them away."

"You won't be able to go there to-night, you know," said Keith. "I thought you understood that from Jim. Bolton's place is quite near mine as the crow flies, but you could not go over there to-night. There is only a trail through across the creek above the falls and it would be rather treacherous to follow in the dark."

"Why I thought you were taking me there," she said with a note of dismay. "You don't mean that I have to stay the night at your house?"

"Yes; what I arranged was to take you to my place," Keith replied somewhat surprised. "I have a married couple who 'do for me' in the language of the country and they will put you up for the night and make you quite comfortable. You can easily walk through to Bolton's across the creek in the morning after breakfast. It is about four miles by road from my place to Bolton's although there is only the creek between them, but you see the roads are few and often rather primitive in this country. The road he takes to the station is quite a different one from mine," he explained, hoping to make her view the matter reasonably.

"Well, the man at the store did not explain to me or I should rather have stayed where I was," she complained, a note of distress in her voice. "Oh, surely, you could take me there to-night," she pleaded. "It would not take you so very long and I would be willing to pay you well for your time. You don't know how anxious I am to get to my journey's end and to be with people I know."

Keith flicked the off horse impatiently with his whip. A few big drops of rain began to fall.

"But, my dear girl," he said, indulgently, but with no note of yielding in his voice; "it is very easy to talk about it; but you do not know what Bolton's road is like just now. I am sorry but I am afraid I cannot oblige you."

The twilight had passed and the road wound up and down mostly between high banks overgrown with small trees and brush with an occasional stump or dead trunk, the outline of which stood out drearily against the dull but luminous sky. The horses plodded steadily along. Each foot as it was lifted out of the thick clay mud made a loud pop and the springs of the wagon groaned at times complainingly.

The girl sat silent for a few moments. When she spoke again her voice had a new note and there was no mistaking the tone of it.

"Then if you will not take me to Bolton's," she said, "would you mind taking me back to the store? I do not wish to go to your place."

Keith pondered for a moment before speaking. He could see that she was suspicious of him, that she doubted his good faith; and he resented it. Secure in the knowledge of his own righteous intentions, he was not going to be ordered about by a servant girl whom at some inconvenience he was trying to oblige. He had had some unpleasant experiences with hired girls in his early days at the ranch, so that he was rather prejudiced; and this one, even if she was just from England seemed to be about as unreasonable as any of them. He was hungry, moreover, and a hungry man is apt to be impatient.

"I am sorry," he said coldly; "but my dinner is waiting at the house. I cannot very well take you back to Jim after agreeing to take you off his hands; and I don't want to drive up to Bolton's in the dark without a lantern at least. However, we will go home now; and if you insist, after you have had something to eat, I will take a lantern and either drive you to Bolton's myself or send my man with you. I hope that will suit you."

"You are very good I am sure; but I would prefer to go back to the store. If you will let me out I will walk back."

"What are you afraid of?" said Keith angrily. "I am no ogre kidnapping young women, I can assure you; and I certainly can't let you out here in the dark to find your way back to the store. A nice mess you would be in walking through this mud. No, if you must have your way of it, we'll make a try for Bolton's. I am afraid

it is going to rain though. We are just at the place where the two roads fork. You had better hold on tight."

They had come to the end of the open country and as they entered the woods, Keith pulled the horses sharply round to the right and they soon began to descend rapidly. The road-bed was now a mere grade cut out of the side-hill, and was barely wider than the tread of the wagon; and they had to hug the bank closely to keep from going over. The horses moved slowly, hanging back on their collars and placing their feet very cautiously. They were none too pleased at having their noses turned away from home again. It was almost pitch-dark and Keith had to rely on his remembrance of the road and the feel of the lines on his horses' mouths to guide him in following its windings. The wagon wheels ground jarringly as they skidded on the grade and far below they could hear the swollen creek rushing along through the canyon. The rain was now coming down heavily and although the canopy of leaves above them helped to shield them from it, enough was coming through to wet them considerably. The road continued on the descent for about a mile and then it began to ascend again. The mud instead of shallow and stony was now of a deep clay and the horses slipped and stumbled repeatedly, which was the more alarming on account of the narrowness of the road and the depth of the declivity along the verge of which it ran.

Keith had his hands full with the horses and encouraged them both with whip and voice as they toiled with difficulty up the hill through the thick mud; and the girl sat silent, holding on to the seat as the wagon swayed and jolted. They had not gone far up the hill when at a sharp curve in the road where the bank on the inside towered high above it, the front wheel on the outside suddenly seemed to drop down and the girl would have fallen out had she

not caught Keith by the arm. She clung to him a moment while the wagon seemed to hang on the edge of space. Keith had quickly pulled the horses back or the whole would have gone over; and, as it was, the team responding too vigorously to his sudden pull, nearly backed the rear wheels over the grade. With a cut of the whip he managed, however, to force them to stand their ground, trembling against the bank.

"There's something wrong," he said, "with the road ahead; I shall have to jump down and see what it is. You had better get out first though, as I'm afraid to leave you in the wagon. I wish we had a light to see what is ahead of us. Better get off on the inside;" and, standing up in the wagon, he let her pass in front of him and clamber down over the wheel. Then he got down himself and went round in front of the horses to examine the road. Feeling his way along, he soon found that the heavy rain had washed away a part of it and it was impossible to proceed.

"I'm afraid we shall have to turn back after all," he said to the girl who stood, a forlorn shape, beside the wagon. "I'm sorry you got such a fright though; and you must be getting wet in this beastly rain. You'd better put this overcoat on," and he took it off and bundled her into it, disregarding her objections. His annoyance with her, strange to say, seemed to have passed away in the excitement and his tone was kindly. "Do you think you could hold the team while I run the wagon down to the foot of the hill? I daren't try to back them down the grade."

"I think I can," she answered meekly.

"Good; just wait till I unhitch them."

As quickly as the restlessness of the horses would permit, he got them loose; and she held them by the bridles while, with considerable difficulty and some narrow escapes from

disaster, he got the wagon down where there was room to turn it round.

The rain was still pouring but he soon got the horses harnessed again in spite of their restlessness.

"I'm afraid the fates have decreed that you must stay at my house to-night after all, Miss Coon," Keith said, as he almost lifted her in out of the muddy road; and that was all that was spoken until about half an hour later when he pulled up at the ranch. From one of the front windows a cheery light beamed out and from around the side, a man appeared carrying a stable lantern.

Keith jumped out and helped his passenger down.

"I was kept a bit late, Alec," he said. "This is Miss Coon who is going over to Bolton's in the morning. She will stay with us to-night."

The man took the horses and Keith ushered the girl into the house, the back of which looked to the road, by the rear door. The passageway was dark; but he struck a match and by its light he led her through a narrow hallway to the kitchen where a stout, red-cheeked woman was busy over a range. An appetising odour of fried onions came wafting out.

CHAPTER III

At last I have a Sabine farm
Abloom with shrubs and flowers;
And garlands gay I weave by day
Amid those fragrant bowers;
And yet, O fortune hideous
I have no blooming Lydias;
And what, ah, what's a Sabine farm
to us without its Lydias?.

EUGENE FIELD.

"THIS is Miss Coon, Mrs. Dalrymple," said Keith when they had entered, "who is going to work at Mr. Bolton's. I brought her up as there was nobody at Brayton to meet her; and I want you to give her some supper and make her comfortable for the night. I see you have not had your own yet, so that will be all right."

Mrs. Dalrymple had gasped with astonishment but she hastened to cover it by offering a chair to the visitor.

"Come in to the fire and dry yourself, Miss," she said, as she helped her to take off Keith's big overcoat, which was dripping wet, and her own coat. "My, but you are wet!"

The girl made an attractive picture with the drops of water still hanging on her cheeks and in her hair which the wind had blown about her temples in wavy curls. A rich flood of colour suffused her features, the delicacy of which harmonised with her slight and graceful figure; and a pair of big, blue eyes glanced with a certain anxious scrutiny at Mrs. Dalrymple before seating herself. How-

ever, she was plainly reassured by the woman's kindly air and motherly appearance and her expression of timidity and a certain tenseness in her bearing quickly disappeared. Keith stood a moment watching her, as she sat in front of the stove, somewhat at a loss just how to take his leave.

"You will be all right now I hope," he said; "and I am sure Mrs. Dalrymple will look after you. In the morning, Alec will take you over to Bolton's. I hope you will be none the worse for your wetting."

"Oh, I'm sure I won't, thanks to your overcoat," she said glancing up with a smile. "I must thank you for all the trouble you have taken. I hope you forgive me for insisting on you taking me up there to-night. I'm sure you must have thought me very forward; but I have never been alone in this way before and this country seemed so strange and desolate to me," she apologised, blushing up to the tips of her ears.

"Oh, don't worry about that," Keith replied good-naturedly. "Well, good-night;" and he backed himself out of the door rather vexed at the embarrassment which he had been unable to conquer. He passed into the hall and hung up his hat before entering the dining-room where the table was set for dinner. It was a cheerful room with a large fireplace in which a bright log-fire was burning. A large sable-coloured collie arose from before it and jumped upon him with frantic expressions of welcome to which he responded somewhat absent-mindedly. Then Mrs. Dalrymple entered with his dinner and he sat down at the table, still in a brown study.

"Well, if this isn't a rum business," he thought to himself as he helped himself to a goodly portion of beef-steak pie. "It just shows how rusty one gets, living alone in the wilds here without any society. It's a strange thing that I should feel as bashful as a boy of twenty in talking

to a servant girl. Strange that the mere question of sex should make such a difference. I suppose it's because I haven't spoken to a young woman alone scarcely since I came out here."

"She's a persistent little thing though for all her air of friendlessness," his reflections ran on. "There was something about the way she insisted on me taking her to Bolton's that made it impossible to refuse without feeling that one had been churlish or a brute. She had rather a cheek to ask it all the same. One would have thought it was enough for me to bring her up here without driving an extra six miles on roads such as Bolton's. But that's the way with these servant girls, they tell me. Once they touch Canadian soil, they forget their class altogether and think they are as good as anybody else. The first thing you know they expect to dine with the family."

"Come to think of it that young woman's manner was more assured than my own and the way she smiled when I was telling Mrs. Dalrymple about her had a suggestion of derision that I didn't altogether like. It was one of these inscrutable Mona Lisa-like smiles that women affect when they're thinking how much they despise you. Seems to be a sort of failing to the whole sex, whether gentle or simple. Cats have the same thing. You can never be sure what they are thinking of you. That's why I like a dog. Cæsar, old boy," he continued aloud to the collie on the hearth-rug; "there's nothing secret about your thoughts. Never any question of contemptuous tolerance with you. You either love us with your whole hearts or you hate us consumedly: Hang the women, anyhow! I was finished with them three years ago. They bring trouble wherever they go, don't they, Cæsar, old boy?"

The dog wagged his tail vigorously upon the floor and

then getting up, he laid his head upon his master's knee and looked up into his eyes.

For all Keith's indifference to the sex, he somehow could not get his thoughts off the girl who was sitting at supper with his servants at the other end of the house; and he was conscious of a certain feeling of elation, a certain faint stimulus of pleasure which he could only ascribe to his meeting with her. The touch of her arms upon his shoulder when he had lifted her out of the wagon lingered in his memory with a pleasing persistence.

"It's all on account of this living like a hermit in the woods," he said to himself angrily at last; "I'll be going dotty the first thing I know."

He rang the bell and Mrs. Dalrymple appeared with a tray and began to clear away the things.

"How is your visitor now, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"Oh, she didna eat much supper, sir. I'm thinkin' she was gey tired, the puir thing; but I'm making up her bed now and she'll be a' right in the morning, sir."

"I doubt she's pretty slim for such work as she will have to do in service out here on a farm."

"That she be, sir; but you can never tell; sometimes they slim ones is the most active. They dinna hae as much weight to carry around as the likes of me, you see, sir. However, she hasna her sorrows to seek, staying in one o' them bush ranches. It's a lonesome life for a lass that's been in service till a big house in the old country."

"Was she a servant in a big house?"

"So I understand, sir. She says the house she was in, they keepit twenty servants."

"She'll find it dull here then, I fear," said Keith as he lighted his cigar and took up his newspaper; and Mrs. Dalrymple departed with her tray.

CHAPTER IV

Good-night—here's the end of my paper;
Good-night,—if the longitude please,—
For may be, while wasting my taper,
Your sun's climbing over the trees.

BRET HARTE.

PORTLAKE, B. C.,
10 *April,* 19—

MY DEAR DOTY:—

I have been suffering from a bit of the blues and the only remedy I could think of that was likely to drive them away was to sit down at six thousand miles distance —my, but it looks like a long way written out like that— and have a real old-time chat with you. If I could only have one of the old-style bear hugs that you used to practise on me and then loll with you for half an hour on the hearthrug before the fire as we used to—but there I mustn't think about that or I shall be blue in earnest.

First of all, to clear away all those dire forebodings and prognostications with which you tried to cheer me on parting—for you did become very, very proper all at once for such a harum-scarum, fly-away, ready-for-anything person as you usually are—I must tell you that I arrived safely at my destination. No wily 'bunco-steerer' tried to cozen me out of my money and no dashing adventurer tried to marry me against my will; for all the people I met were most ordinary and respectable. Only on my arrival at Brayton did it seem for a little as if there might

be a chance for some of the unpleasantnesses that you predicted coming true.

The train arrived just about dusk. I had telegraphed Bolton to be meeting me but, lo and behold! there was no sign of him; and there was nobody at the station—if you can call a mere shed and some planking a station—but an ancient pioneer who turned out to be the postmaster and storekeeper, a young rancher in overalls and a yellow dog.

There you have the stage setting; and you can imagine me, poor little me—and growing littler every minute to judge by my feelings—dumped down with my trunk by the side of the track at nightfall in the wilds of B. C. No hotel, no conveyance for hire that could be got to take me to my destination—which, by the way, was four miles away—in short, no nothing!

However, the old storekeeper took pity on me and prevailed upon the rancher to take me up in his wagon—very cross and sour the latter looked about it and he didn't take many pains to hide his feelings.

As to what happened on the drive up, Doty, I shall say as "Peck's Bad Boy" always did in the story whenever the chapter ended in his getting a licking, "let us draw a veil over the painful scene that followed." In a way, it was quite an adventure. At one time, I must confess to thinking very seriously of all your doleful warnings and prophesies; but what seemed to have threatenings of tragedy turned out in the end to be mere comedy with, however, certain elements of farce intermingled. Some day, I shall probably tell you all about it but not now. The affair is still too recent and painful. As a sop to your curiosity though, Doty, I shall only confess that I ate enough humble pie on this occasion to have given an ordinary person indigestion. Luckily my sense of humour helped me to pull through without serious consequences.

I found dear, old Nursie so glad to see me. The poor soul has been very ill with pneumonia and Bolton with the help of Dicky had nursed her through the worst of it; but the doctor had told them that she must have a woman to give her proper attention as there was danger she would not pull through. Well, she had just arrived the day before, having come by the other station; but when she saw the loneliness of the place, she said she would not stay on any account and had gone right away without taking her trunk out of the wagon.

You can imagine the state they were all in when I arrived. Mrs. Bolton was terribly worried about me too, and my poor reception—it seemed they had never got my telegram—but I soon relieved her anxiety and told her I would do the work that the maid should have done; and I made her laugh by telling her how I had been taken for the maid already.

She had not been able to make out at all the meaning of my letter from London and the reason for my coming; but now she knows, and she says that I did quite right to run away. So there is one person that does not disapprove, you see. It was all right for you to counsel patience; but you don't know what it is to live with Aunt Sophronia. She was bound to marry me to Wilfrid; and if I had stayed she would certainly have had her way. Anyway she would have contrived to make life unbearable for me, so I thought that this was the best way out. I shall be twenty-one this summer and my own mistress and, by that time, the storm may have subsided somewhat; at least I hope so. It was rather rough on poor Wilfrid for me to run off as I did with the wedding announced as it was, but it wasn't my fault. I don't think he will bear any malice over it either for he knows that his mother is to blame for the whole thing.

You must guard my secret, though, because they must not find out where I have gone. I have arranged with the Boltons that they are not to disabuse people of the idea that I am the "hired help" as they call it in this country. I am also known by the name of Miss Coon, which you can bear in mind when you are addressing my letters. This is the way the old storekeeper understood my name; and I have thought it safest to keep it that way. It's a small world after all and Colquhoun is an uncommon name. I can't say I enjoy "Coon"—I can hear you giggle at this distance—but for a few months, it doesn't matter. The family all call me Marjorie, however. Bolton is very quiet—almost morose; but he is very kind to me. Their one boy, Dick, is a bright little chap of twelve and he, more than any one else, helps me to keep cheery. He thinks the world of me and we are great chums.

The Boltons do not make a living out of their place as yet and they are very poor. He does work outside the ranch to keep things going and altogether they have a pretty hard row to hoe. I hope before long though, I shall be able to help them.

What a long screed I have written you all about myself; but I know that you are not the least bit bored. Tell me all the news of Holmwood for I'm hungering for "the soun' o' a kent voice an' the sicht o' a kent face." If you were only out here with me and we could "roam the woods together," I would be quite happy, I think. Don't forget to tell me all you know as to the household at the Hall and how they took my unceremonious running off. Really, Doty, it was an awful thing to do, wasn't it? and the shivers run up and down my back when I think of it. But there, I don't care; the marriage would have been worse, now wouldn't it?

I must close now for I have a lot of work to do. Re-

member you are the only link—a golden one it's true—between me and the old land at present, so you must write me long and often.

Yours as ever,
Marjorie "Coon."

To Miss Dorothea Trelawny,
Holmwood Manor,
Bybridge,
Cornwall, England.

CHAPTER V

The Age of Chivalry is gone.

EDMUND BURKE.

'Ay,—where are those heroic knights
Of old—those armadillo wights
Who wore the plated vest—
Great Charlemagne, and all his peers
Are cold—enjoying with their spears
An everlasting rest!

T. HOOD.

KEITH heard nothing more of his passenger until two days after. He was out by the barn cutting out the frame for a harrow when young Dick Bolton came whistling down the road and sauntered over as he often did on his way to school. He and Keith were great friends as they found that there was much in common between them. Dick had a great admiration for the Englishman who had ridden to hounds and who could tell wonderful stories of boat races and hard-won cricket matches, opening up bright visions of an untried world to his young imagination. Keith, on his side, found a real pleasure in the freshness and naïveté of the boy's chat.

"Hello, Mr. Leicester."

"Hello, Dick; off to school again?"

"No, I'm not to go to-day. Mother's sick and I've to stay at home and chop wood and look after things. Father's workin' on the roads. What's that you're makin'? a

harrow?" asked Dick, following Keith's actions with a curious eye.

"You've guessed it."

"I thought you had one already."

"So I have but it's too small. Doesn't cover the land fast enough."

"Are you going to plow all that land you cleared last year?"

"Yes, and then I'll seed it to clover and timothy. There's ten acres in that piece."

"Gee! you've got a fine place now, haven't you?" said Dick, his eyes shining. "Must have thirty or forty acres cleared now?"

"Forty-five all told, Dicky; about twenty of that in orchard, so when that comes into full bearing, I shall have my hands full."

"Will you let me pick apples for you then?" Dick asked with an eager sparkle in his eyes.

"I would have to make you whistle all the time if I did," said Keith, glancing up with a smile.

Dick looked puzzled and his face became serious.

"What for?" he asked and then he grinned. "Oh I see," he said, "so's I couldn't eat too many. Why do you make holes through the wood both ways?" he asked as Keith began boring with his auger at right angles to the holes he had already bored. "You're making a smaller hole too."

"This lot of holes is for the bolts that are to keep the wood from splitting."

"I see," Dick nodded. "Please may I use your grindstone to sharpen my axe?"

"Oh all right; but see you run plenty of water on it. Thought your mother had some one to help her now. Miss Coon, is it, her name is?"

"So she has but we call her Marjorie. She said she

didn't like us to call her Miss Coon. 'Coon' means 'nigger' you know; mebbe that was why," he suggested with a grin. "She's no nigger, you can just bet. I think she's right pretty an' I like her. Say!" he added as the thought struck him, "you drove her up, didn't you? Oh, she told me all about it."

"Oh, she did, did she?" Keith replied without enthusiasm as he carefully measured off the intervals for the teeth of his harrow; "was it a moving chronicle of field and flood?"

"I dunno. She just said that the wagon came near tipping over the bank. She said that she wouldn't have asked you to drive 'er up if she had known what kind of a road it was."

"Was that all?"

Dick scraped with one foot on the ground in a way he had when embarrassed.

"Er——about all I reckon," he said after a brief pause. Then blushing, "she did say as how she thought you might have walked with her across the creek after supper when the rain had stopped when you knew how much she wanted to get to our place that night. Say, who was Shivalree? She said he was dead anyway and she seemed to be right sorry about it. I thought I'd ask you as you'd be sure to know."

It was Keith's turn to blush as he felt the boy's clear eyes fixed on his face. So the young woman had presumed to question his conduct after the trouble that he had taken with her.

"Chivalry, my son, if you want it personified," he said, speedily recovering his equanimity, "was a splendid chap that lived hundreds of years ago who went about helping the weak and more especially, maidens in distress. It didn't matter how humble their rank was, Chivalry was

always ready to fight for them or help them in any way he could. He usually rode a splendid warhorse in full armour and carried a lance and a sword. At first, they were always grateful for what he did and that was all the reward that he wanted. By and bye, however, they began to presume upon their sex—that is, to take advantage of the fact of their being women—and poor old Chivalry died. It was too much for the old chap and broke his heart. Dick," and Keith's tones were impressively solemn, "I'm afraid that if Chivalry had been alive now he would have been afraid to go near a woman."

"But they ain't all suffragettes, are they?" said Dick rather scandalised by this sweeping indictment of the sex. "Some of the policemen did have a time with them, didn't they, wot with their scratching and their red pepper? Most of them had a hammer in their handbags too, and they didn't do a thing to them store windows in London. Gee! they would stick a hatpin into a man just as quick as lightnin' and he wouldn't know what had struck him. But there ain't any of that kind round here that I knows on, 'cept old lady Ribycil; and she takes after the old man with a big stick sometimes. He won't work a stroke tho' an' I guess he needs it all right."

"No, you're right enough, they're not all bad, my boy," he answered. He had no business to poison the boy's mind with such cynical remarks, he reflected. After all, it was a dangerous habit to generalise from a limited experience and his own had been such. Once was enough, he told himself with a touch of bitterness, thinking of his only serious love affair and how it had turned out.

"My, though, but she knows lots of songs," said Dick with enthusiasm, "I just wish I could sing like she can. She does sing awful funny sometimes though. But she don't know nothing about cookin'. I know a lot more'n

she does and I'm showing her how. She says she'll soon learn. Guess I'll better get busy though and get back;" and, shouldering his axe, with a nod, Dick was off to the grindstone.

Keith went on piecing out his harrow and boring the holes for the teeth; but the tenor of his thoughts was troubled. Who was this jade of a servant-girl that she should presume to sit in judgment on him? Hadn't he done enough for her when he gave her free board and lodging for the night not to speak of hauling her and her effects up from the village? He was angry at himself for thinking of the matter at all. He tried to forget about it but always found his thoughts coming round to it again.

"I've got a grievance," he said to himself; "and I can't resist the luxury of indulging in it. Well, they say it's a poor heart that never rejoices and to be sure there's little enough that takes place here for a fellow to think about," and he whistled a few bars of "La Bohème."

"And she sings 'awful funny,' does she. Well, I think she'll have to 'go some' as Dick would say if she sings any funnier than some of the choir sing down at Portlake." And Keith smiled delightedly at the reminiscence.

His reflections were soon interrupted, however, by the arrival of two Swedes who owned adjoining farms, who had come to interview him as to certain work they wanted done on the road to their places. Keith was a councillor for the Municipality and the roadwork for the district was under his charge. It was no light responsibility either, for the supply of funds was limited while the farmers were often unreasonable in their demands for improvements. There were always heart-burnings and bickerings about it and the councillors had a hard time trying to satisfy them all.

However, Keith had endeavoured to be fair in his administration and, so far, had managed to please his constituents. It was a full hour, however, before he was able to get rid of his two visitors who, in spite of their imperfect English, talked with a volubility that was astonishing. The best of the morning was gone when, with a sigh, he turned again to his work.

CHAPTER VI

You are hiding from us, Springtide, hiding in the slashing,
Coming from the mountain I saw your tracks go down.
In among the willow swamps I saw your young feet splashing,
Saw among the alder stems the glitter of your gown.
SIR CLIVE PHILLIPS-WOLLEY.

DICK was bursting with importance as he drove the buggy with the old roan horse up before the four-room log house with its rough shake-roofed verandah, to take Marjorie to Portlake. The buggy had been bought at an auction for twenty dollars at a time when the Boltons were not as hard up as they were now. Its condition clearly suggested that it had seen better days but the remains of a former grandeur were unmistakable. From the elegant lines of its phaëton body like the stern of some ancient Spanish galleon to the silver-mounted dashboard and sidelamps and curving coupé shafts, it was clearly a vehicle of patrician origin that had fallen upon evil days. For alas, the once glossy sides were now caked with mud and the silver work all tarnished and one of the lamps was broken and both were long past all usefulness. A sprung hind axle, moreover, lent to the rear wheels a sort of irresponsible roll reminiscent of the legs of some elderly toper that seem to describe strange curves and parabolas of their own quite independent of one another as well as of the owner they support.

But there was certainly nothing apologetic in the air of the young Jehu as he stood waiting for his passenger.

Phaëton as he jumped upon the chariot of the sun could have presented no prouder picture than Dick in his khaki-coloured overalls and cap, his hazel eyes, bright with anticipation. It was the first time in his twelve years of existence that he was to take anyone for a drive. And the young lady wearing a dark skirt with a green sweater and a woolen toque to match upon her dark hair, who came out to him, was one he felt that any fellow might be proud to take under his wing. There was a faint flash of amusement in her eyes as she looked down upon the outfit but they quickly took in the boy's eager pose.

"And so this is the buggy?" she cried. "Why how fine old Kitchener looks in it. I'm sure he's quite proud of drawing such a fine equipage after the old wagon. Isn't it a lovely afternoon for a jaunt? I feel just as if I was fifteen again."

Kitchener had a pronounced Roman nose and perhaps it was this outstanding feature rather than his general gaunt and scarred appearance as of a warrior of a hundred stricken fields, that had caused him to be named after the famous Field Marshal; but when they had passed through the gate, he trotted away down the road as meekly and sedately as if he had only been called Dobbin. It was one of those delightful days when winter has packed up its goods for departure and spring while not actually in possession is yet hovering around revealing her presence by many a subtle sign and many a fragrant essence. The air was full of dewy freshness and as they drove along through the alders now green-tinged with their swelling leaf-buds, their naked limbs aquiver for the season's finery, the girl felt her spirits rise in response to Nature's promise. It was her first daylight outing in the new country and the wildness and strangeness of it all appealed most strongly

to her imagination. To ride in such a conveyance was in itself an adventure.

Soon, they passed out of the alder bush into a thick forest of pines and cedars of lofty height, the pitchy fragrance of which filled the air. Here and there, a long, dead trunk stood out black amongst its green-clad fellows or a blackened stump showed where some forest monarch had succumbed to the ravages of the fire, its deadly foe. After rural England, so trim and well-cultivated with its hedge-rows and its smiling park-lands, this first experience of the forest primeval thrilled her delightfully. There were no fences on either side and no evidence of human occupation, other than the mud and wheel-tracks of the rude trail along which they drove. All was silent around them except for the gurgle of innumerable brooks and streamlets, swollen by the recent rains.

"Oh, what glorious trees!" she exclaimed at last. "Aren't they grand though, Dick?"

"Oh, we've got lots bigger than them," said Dick with an air of pride. "They're not so bad though, I guess. Wish I owned them and I'd show you something. This timber ain't never been cut yet."

"Well, I'm sure I do hope they'll never cut it."

Dick gave a grunt and his small face was full of masculine contempt for feminine impracticability.

"What'd be the good of it then I should like to know. 'Tain't doing nobody any good now."

"But what would Peter Pan and the fairies do if you cut it down? I'm sure they must have just beautiful times in the moonlight nights under these trees. Haven't you ever seen them, Dick?"

Dick paused a moment to give Kitchener, whose walk had developed into a crawl, a vigorous cut with the whip. "No," he said slowly, after that animal had responded with

a jerk that would have dislocated any neck that was not well prepared for it, "there ain't any folks around here of that name, none at least that I know of an' I guess I know pretty near everybody. There's a Mr. Faris down Patchdale way but that's a good ten mile from here. Who's Peter Pan?"

"Why, I thought every boy knew about Peter Pan—Mr. Barrie's Peter Pan. He was a little boy, you know, that never wanted to grow up or go to school, so he went off to live with the fairies in a dear, little house in the branches of a tree; and he had such a splendid time playing with them."

"My, but that was ripping, I guess he didn't have to do no chores though. But who were the fairies?"

"Why, you poor boy! did you really never hear of the fairies? Well, they are beautiful little spirits that go about the world at night doing good deeds to help people out. They were always young and they are invisible to mortal eyes except to a few privileged ones like Peter Pan who have faith in them. Sometimes, they do people's work for them so that when they get up in the morning they find that what they left all undone the night before had been finished by the fairies while they slept."

"Gee!" exclaimed Dick enthusiastically; "I just wish they'd saw some wood for me; but I guess there's none of them around this country. Did you ever see 'em?" and Dick turned his hazel eyes, alight with interest, full upon the young woman. It was such a gaze as forbade deception and Marjorie flinched before it.

"Well," she said, after a moment of hesitation, "I've seen them in the theatre, of course; but, in their native wilds, I've only seen them with my mind's eye and not nearly so often since I've grown up," and she gave a little sigh. "One loses so much when one grows up, Dick,

my dear; and the distinction of being fit company for the fairies is one of the things. Peter Pan, I'm afraid, was wiser than most of us."

"I dunno," said Dick doubtfully; "I wish I was grown up and had a horse and a gun of my own. Seems like a boy like me can't do anything he wants to. Now that guy, Shivalree must have had a dandy time."

"Who did you say?"

"Shivalree—you know—the chap you said was dead. I asked Mr. Leicester who he was and he told me all about him."

"Oh!" and there was a subtle change in Marjorie's inflection which the boy did not notice; "and what did he know about chivalry, I wonder."

"He said he was a fine, brave guy that rode around on a big horse and rescued maidens in distress; and it didn't matter to him how humble they were. At first, it was all right and they were grateful to him for saving them; but after a while, they got so as they didn't thank him at all and just took all his trouble as if they had a right to it because they were women. This made him feel sort of sore after a bit 'cos although he didn't look for no reward yet he did think they should be grateful to him; and being as he was a kind of soft-hearted chap, it worried him so much that he died."

Marjorie's feelings were a curious mixture as she listened to Dick's naïve repetition of Mr. Leicester's version of the death of Chivalry and the causes that led up to it. When she made the remark as to Chivalry being dead she had, of course, never expected that it would be repeated to Mr. Leicester; and lo, here he had flung it back to her charged with the accusation of ingratitude. Well, if she had been ungrateful—and perhaps, in her inmost conviction she felt that there might be a grain of justifi-

cation for such an assertion—it had not been her fault. It was the condescending spirit with which the service had been rendered that she had objected to. In conventional England one might have expected it; but out here in the free and untrammelled West, one looked for something different.

"Oh, but that's not the way I've heard the story at all," said Marjorie; and she laughed lightly but scornfully. "When Chivalry was young his heart was humble and he never thought of himself at all; but as he grew older, he began to get conceited and selfish and to be always thinking what a wonderful fellow he was. By and bye, he would not think of rescuing a maiden without first enquiring about her lineage and if he found she was of low degree, he would not rescue her at all; or if he did, he treated her with such an air of condescension as to rob the act of all its grace. So, it was no wonder that the maiden was not always as grateful as Chivalry expected of her. At any rate, Chivalry's heart became cold and proud and selfish and he died finally of enlargement of the cranium—that's the head you know," she explained. "At least, that is what I've been led to believe was his fate."

Dick leaned forward to lift Kitchener's tail which had a habit of twitching over the lines, in a manner very disconcerting to the driver as it held them in such a grip of iron that they were completely useless until they were released again.

"Well, mebbe you're right," he said after a pause; "but Mr. Leicester knows an awful lot. We'll be able to make better time now we are out of the woods."

They had come to the end of the timber and the road now emerged into more open country and was fenced on both sides. As they drove on, they passed rude log shanties

with small clearings around them showing where the settler had made his first start in the fight for mastery of the forest. Stumps in all stages of the laborious process of destruction were to be seen. One man had half a dozen or so burning away bravely in the holes from which they had been partially blown out by powder; and another with one horse attached to a wire cable, was using a stumping machine to draw them from the jealous earth. Dick was delighted to explain the whole process of land-clearing to his companion.

There was one rather exciting experience to the English girl. They were trotting quietly along the road when a man in the field to their right suddenly came rushing down towards them shouting out words that were quite unintelligible and gesticulating violently. Jumping the fence he stood in the road in front of them, still waving his hands and jabbering a string of broken English which it was impossible to understand. His clothes were ragged and torn and his face was covered with mud and grime.

"Am I to be held up on my very first drive in this country?" she said to herself, her heart beating fast with fright.

She looked at Dick to see how he was affected by the apparition and was relieved to see that he seemed to be in no wise alarmed but merely pulled up the horse and grinned.

"Hello, Mr. Hansen, what's up now?" he questioned coolly.

"You bay kape back," the man cried in broken English. "Us be blowin' stoomp. Here bay blast soon."

"He's got a blast set in a stump farther down," Dick explained; "and he doesn't want us to go any nearer until it goes off."

Just at that moment it did go off with a great noise

and scattering of earth and roots in every direction; and Kitchener, not having the same acquaintance with gunpowder as his famous namesake, came very near to upsetting the buggy in his astonishment and terror.

"It's a hard job clearing land," said Dick when they were going on again, "and a mighty slow one. Dad's been six years on our place and he's only got about ten acres cleared. An' powder costs such a lot too. I just wish we had plenty of money."

They were now passing through a better settled district where the ranches were mostly fully cleared and better kept; and some of them had freshly-painted houses of one and two stories—one house with a flagstaff, Dick proudly pointed out as belonging to the Reeve. After they had passed it, the road came to the brow of a hill from which they saw the village below them and the wide stream of the Fraser stretching away out to the west. Along its banks lay the line of the railway and the few stores and houses that composed the village were grouped about the station.

Dick drove his passenger up to the store with some pride and cramped the wheels to allow of her getting out without any danger of soiling her dress. The building was crude enough in its outside appearance with its unpainted rustic boards but was commodious and well-appointed within. All sorts of miscellaneous wares were heaped or scattered around, clothing, saddlery, hardware, every thing almost that one could think of and there was that delightful, distinctive, composite smell which is only to be found in a country store. At the right of the entrance, a space had been partitioned off for the post office and there was a window through which the mail was handed out. By the side of it were numerous placards, printed forestry and game-law notices, advertisements of

live-stock for sale by neighbouring farmers written in scrawling handwriting or painfully printed in ink; and the attractions of a Grand Masquerade Dance, at which the admission for gentlemen was to be fifty cents and for ladies twenty-five, were heralded in glowing terms.

The place seemed somewhat dark after coming in from the full light outside; and Marjorie stood for a few moments looking about her until her eyes became accustomed to the gloom. The store-keeper, a jovial, rubicund Scotsman, to her surprise seemed to know who she was and asked very kindly for Mrs. Bolton. He did not offer to carry out her parcels to the buggy, however; and as Dick had declared it necessary for him to stay with Kitchener as the afternoon train was due, she had to do this herself. There were several of them and she had just almost reached the door when Mr. Leicester strode in. He wore a norfolk jacket, riding breeches and leggings and presented a very different appearance from the shabby-looking rancher who had driven her to his place a week ago.

Now, Marjorie had been anticipating her next meeting with Mr. Leicester and had nursed pleasant visions of the effective manner in which she would administer to him a well-merited snubbing. To have it thrust upon her now when all the advantages of the encounter were upon the other side was most annoying. To be coldly dignified with one's arms full of parcels is difficult if not really impossible. At least, Marjorie found it so; and in her vexation she coloured up to the roots of her hair and straightway dropped two of the parcels.

There was no such disadvantage of surprise on Keith's side. He had chatted with Dick outside and was aware of Miss Coon's presence in the store although he did not expect to meet her on the threshold. Truth to tell, he had felt somewhat piqued at the remarks on the decadence of

chivalry which had been so naïvely reported to him; although he felt that he had lowered his dignity to let his mind dwell on the matter at all. He felt annoyed at having to meet Miss Coon but he could not now very well avoid it; and he felt that it would be only civil for him to ask her how she was getting along.

So he smiled condescendingly at the parcel-laden figure but was quickly jolted out of his self-possession by the accident that occurred. If it is difficult to adopt a dignified pose when one drops one's parcels, it is equally difficult to do so when one sees them drop and has to pick them up, especially when the one is a package of rice which has burst in its fall and the other is a bag of onions, several of which have rolled out of the mouth of the bag.

"Allow me," said Keith, as he stopped to retrieve the fallen.

"Oh, I'm sorry to trouble you," said Marjorie, as, after a moment's pause, she went on out to the buggy with what was left of her load, her head thrown back proudly and only the crimson in her cheeks proclaiming her distress; Keith followed meekly in the rear, cautiously bearing his part of the salvage.

"Why didn't you ask old Jamieson to carry these out for you?" said Dick. "Gee! looks like there has been a wedding," he chuckled as he saw the train of rice that Keith was leaving in his wake. "I guess I'll get Jim to give me another bag though, or we'll lose it all before we get home," and with a bound he was out of the buggy and away with the rice into the store.

Marjorie climbed into the buggy, after bestowing her parcels in the bottom. Its antediluvian appearance which had before given her so much pleasure was now as wormwood to her soul; and Kitchener's knobby and ill-kept figure seemed a mark for derision when set beside Mr.

Leicester's sleek, bay cob that was sniffing contemptuously at the roan's Roman nose.

"I trust that you are none the worse of your long journey and the ride in the rain that came at the end of it," said Keith after he had placed the onions in safety at her feet. She looked decidedly pretty, he thought to himself, with her delicate features and long, black lashes and the flame of colour that still burned up to the very tips of her small ears. He had recovered from his momentary embarrassment and felt himself master of the situation.

"Oh, not at all," she said. "I must thank you again for your kindness in driving me up with you, especially as it put you to so much inconvenience. The storekeeper should not have foisted me on you the way he did;" and she smiled somewhat coldly as she turned to look him in the eyes. "This is the second time that you have come to my rescue," she added with a touch of roguishness glancing down at the onions; "and believe me, I am grateful in proportion to the good-will of the service in both cases. Here is Dick with the rice."

"I'll try you a race up the road, Mr. Leicester," said Dick as he took his seat and gathered up the reins.

"Not to-day, Dicky," Keith replied as he lifted his hat and turned to go back into the store.

CHAPTER VII

One moral's plain—without more fuss;
Man's social happiness all rests on us:
Through all the drama—whether damn'd or not—
Love gilds the scene, and women guide the plot.

SHERIDAN.

KEITH was seated at his supper with Cæsar as usual on the hearthrug beside him. He was thinking how curiously a face may sometimes linger in the memory flitting without rhyme or reason across the web of one's consciousness with something of the same consistency as a phrase of the music of some opera one has heard will keep ringing in one's head for days afterwards. It was now a week since the rencontre at the store and, in spite of the awkwardness he felt he had displayed and the evident embarrassment and dislike of him evinced by "Bolton's hired girl," he still found himself dwelling on the incident with a certain pleasing titillation of spirits.

"Cæsar, my boy, I'm afraid we're going batty, you and I. They say when a chap goes mad with loneliness and privation in the Yukon, 'the North has got him;' I doubt with me it's the West and the woods."

Cæsar wagged his tail gravely but declined otherwise to commit himself.

"Yes, Doggy; this return to Nature and the simple life is all very well but it seems to break down the social barriers with a vengeance. To see me following the hired girl to her buggy—and such a buggy too—as if I were

playing footman to a howling swell—ye gods and little fishes! there was a sight to stagger the good folks at home.

"And truth to tell," he mused, "I'm afraid that the young woman wasn't as appreciative of the condescension as she might have been. She didn't seem any too pleased to see me and methinks there was a suggestion of irony in her manner. What was it she said? Something about 'grateful in proportion to the good-will of the service rendered!' Sounds rather oracular, I'm afraid. Well, it's true enough, the good-will wasn't any too much in evidence that night I brought her up. No doubt, she felt that I was not very civil and she hasn't forgiven me. Chivalry's dead, is he? Well, I only hope Dicky handed on my remarks as to the reason for his decease; that ought to bowl her over if anything would."

At this point Mrs. Dalrymple entered with a plate of toast.

"What is your opinion, Mrs. Dalrymple," said Keith, "as to the deterioration of your sex? Do you think it is losing its old-time virtues of modesty and faith and self-sacrifice and replacing them with a modern cult of indulgence and self-assertion? Some people claim, you know, that woman now instead of being a helpmate to man, has become a mere parasite sapping his strength and pulling down his ideals."

Mrs. Dalrymple placed one hand on her hip and tucked the other below her apron.

"Losh keep me, sir!" she said, "you may depend on it that it's only some meeserable men craturs that are sayin' it that would go back on their ain mithers if they were to profit by it. Not as I know what you mean by a parasite unless it's ane o' thae things in which you tummil doon frae a balloon in, birlin' round a' the time for a' the warld

like a' tapilteerie. Very dangerous things they maun be. I mind aince at Perth seein' a man come doon in ane on the North Inch an' a maist wonderfu' sicht it was; but as for a woman pu'in' a man doon that way, I think it's mair often the ither way roond. Mony a man's only chance of gettin' intae Heaven is by hangin' on to his wife's coat-tails."

"What you are thinking of," said Keith smiling, "is a parachute, not a parasite. However, that's all right. You would suggest no doubt that just as when the man takes hold of the parachute, down he goes, so it is when he becomes attached to a woman."

"Naething o' the kind, sir," she retorted with a grin. "Ye ken fine what I was meanin'. It's the parachute that saves the puir chiel from destruction. If it were na for it he would be dashed to pieces, now wouldn't he? Weel, then that's juist the way wi' the women. It's the men, puir feckless creatures, that are sure tae fa' if they dinna hae the women tae bear them up an' let them come doon easy."

"I see you're a good champion of your sex anyway, Mrs. Dalrymple, and it's no use trying to abuse it to you. But talking of women, have you heard how Mrs. Bolton is?"

"Yes, I was over seein' her this afternoon, sir. She's still poorly but the Doctor says she'll soon be all right again. She's had a hard time of it an', nae doot, it'll hae been quite an expense to them an' they can ill afford it I'm thinkin'."

"I suppose it will be quite an expense having to hire this girl."

"Aye, that it will, at least, if they are paying her. It does na look tae me as she's been used to service either."

"Why, what makes you think that?"

"Oh, it's gey hard to say. I thocht she was a'right the

night you broght her up when she was tellin' me about the servants at the hoose where she was; an' a fine, big establishment it must ha' been. She may have been the hoosekeeper's daughter, but, you mark my words, she has na been in service. She's ower genteel-like and she's got a wey with her. You can tell wi' an auld-country lass though you might na wi' a Canadian. There's plenty o' ladies' maids genteel enough in the way they speak but they dinna hae her mainner;" and she shook her head sagely.

"The plot thickens, Cæsar, my boy," said Keith, when Mrs. Dalrymple had taken her departure, addressing the dog who was lying on the hearthrug looking up at him and gently wagging his tail at the sound of his master's voice. "The beggar maid has acquired possibilities; she is the putative daughter of a housekeeper. We have been entertaining an angel unawares; no wonder that she treats us with cold disdain. Birth and breeding cannot be hidden from the keen eyes of Mrs. Dalrymple, no matter how blind we might be. From housekeeper's daughter to ranch-slavey, there is a height to drop from; and we must have been pouring vitriol on the ground when we patronised her about her 'place.' Well, to-morrow being the Sabbath, you and I, Cæsar, will fare forth and call upon the master of the housekeeper's daughter on a visit of condolence; and incidentally we may learn something of the present status of the lady. Poor Bolton, he has a pretty hard row to hoe making both ends meet and his wife's sickness will come all the harder on him because of the extra expense of the business."

CHAPTER VIII

Ho! green fields and running brooks!
Knotted strings and fishing hooks.
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

THE following afternoon, Keith strolled over towards Bolton's. It was mild and sunny and the sky was full of light, fleecy clouds. He crossed over the newly-ploughed land of his orchard and took the trail down the creek bank to the falls which were one of the sights of the neighbourhood and brought many visitors to see them in the summertime. There were stepping-stones just above them that might be crossed dry-shod in summer but now, when the creek was high with the spring rains, it was necessary to walk the trunk of a great fir that had been "falled" across.

It was with a certain shock and mingled feelings that as he climbed down the steep path, he saw below him a slight figure in green perched right in the middle of the great log fishing intently in the rushing waters below. Avowed woman-hater though he might be, he could not deny the pleasingness of the picture, the greenclad figure with its nymphlike pose harmonised so perfectly with the moss-covered log and the spring foliage of the trees while the rushing, foaming water below added life and contrast. At the same time he felt annoyed that a meeting with Miss Coon—for there was no doubt as to the nymph's identity—should be forced upon him again when the last

one had proved so embarrassing. He had, of course, contemplated the possibility of having to face her at the Boltons; but that was a vastly different thing from a tête-à-tête on the trunk of a tree in the middle of a stream. To retreat up the bank again was to risk discovery and would be too undignified so there was nothing for it but to proceed.

At least, he had the advantage of surprise; for Marjorie was so intent upon her line that she did not observe him until he had come half-way along the log towards her. The sight was so unexpected that she almost dropped her rod; and to tell the truth, her feelings were not at all mingled. Decently clad as she was, save for her head which was hatless, Diana herself did not view Acteon with any greater inward disgust than she did the innocent Keith. Had she been aware of the effectiveness of her pose on the log or of the fact that the truant strands of wavy hair pulled down about her eyes by the tree branches were really most becoming, her annoyance might have been less bitter; but what she did feel was that she was very untidy and somewhat insecure on her perch. Could she never get away from this man who was always thrusting himself on her at the most inopportune moments? He would certainly want to get past and while she had felt perfectly secure and level-headed when she had come out on the log with Dick, the running water and the sudden appearance of Keith had unnerved her and she felt that it would be impossible to get up to her feet unaided, far less walk back to terra firma. However, the first shock of surprise over and her startled faculties rallied bravely.

Keith was the first to speak. He felt grateful that a closer view failed to disillusionise his first impression of her pictorial qualities. In fact, his annoyance had van-

ished and he found himself considering the maiden with at least a kindly tolerance if not an active interest.

"I thought that all old country people were ardent keepers of the Sabbath, at least when they first came out," he said lifting his hat and squatting down on the log a few feet from her.

"This is a work of mercy," she replied with a smile. "We hoped to get something that would tempt the invalid."

"Oh, I see. But I'm afraid there is no sign of a miraculous draught of fishes," said Keith glancing down quizzically at a small trout about five inches long that lay half covered up with a small handkerchief beside a tin of worms.

"No, I doubt all that has been accomplished so far is the slaughter of the innocents, to judge by the number of worms that have been impaled and then sent to a watery grave. They simply will not stay on the hook. I never thoroughly appreciated the true inwardness of the saying that even a worm will turn until this afternoon. It seems to be their one great gift by the way they squirm—ugh," and she gave a little grimace of disgust. "It was all right while Dick was here to put them on; but he went off up stream and left me to my own devices."

"They certainly know how to wriggle," said Keith smiling.

"Dick thought there were more chances of fish further up," she explained. "As for me, I fear I am a poor sportswoman; for if the fish will not come to my line I am not willing to chase all over the stream for them."

"Old Izaak says the angler is like the poet, he has to be born to it; and, no doubt, there is a deal of truth in what he says. One must have, to begin with, a calm and meditative disposition, in fact the philosophic temperament."

"That might be all right with fly-fishing, but to fish successfully with bait, I should say required the temperament of a butcher," said Marjorie, with a scornful intonation and casting viciously. "My acquaintance with old Izaak is of the slightest—a mere nodding one, one might say—but I am inclined to think he used a great deal of argument extolling the mildness of the angler's disposition just to cover the natural cruelty of the craft. I know I felt positively criminal when I was taking that poor little troutlet off the hook; and as for skewering worms"—and she broke off with a little shudder.

Keith regarded her with an amused smile.

"I'm afraid that in the slimness of your acquaintance, you do the old fellow an injustice. Some of his arguments are most incontestable, as, for instance, that the ancient canons of the church while they barred hunting as a suitable recreation for parsons encouraged that of angling as being conducive to mildness and contemplation. Surely, it cannot be very bloodthirsty if it is recommended to them."

Marjorie shook her head.

"I'm not so sure," she said; "I have seen some parsons—Oh, bother! he's off again," she cried in dismay as she gazed sadly at the dangling hook which was bare of its burden.

Keith watched her with some inward amusement as, having gathered up her line, she selected a worm and proceeded in spite of all its wriggling protests to adjust it on the hook. His eye dwelt with appreciation, however, on the graceful curve of her neck and the delicate pink of her cheek, as she bent her head anxiously over her ungrateful task. She was about to throw the line out again when he stopped her.

"No, that won't do," he said. "Suppose you permit me in Dick's absence to perform his duty. Now, had you been a pupil of old Izaak instead of a mere acquaintance, you would know better than to be satisfied with only one impalement of the worm; for he has half a chapter on the proper way to do it. That fellow wouldn't be on the hook for two minutes;" and he leaned over and grasped the line. "You have to put it through him twice," and he showed her how it was done so that the worm would not come off. "It's not exactly a lady's job though."

"I see," she said with a smile a little rueful; "and I thank you very much. I think though that after this I'll have to fish with a fly. It's very nice to have a helper along, of course, but real sportswomen, don't you think, ought to be independent?"

"Well, perhaps," he hesitated. "Still you know, from a purely masculine standpoint, when it's a question of a lady, we do not like her too independent. See how it flatters my vanity to be allowed to bait your hook?"

"Oh!" she turned to look at him reproachfully; "and I thought that your impulse was purely benevolent. I have often been told that men were above all such petty weaknesses."

"Not at all," he parried promptly; "but they are more subtle in concealing them, or rather in attempting to conceal them; for, no doubt, the average man is transparent before feminine eyes. Ostrich-like he may imagine himself inscrutable as the Sphinx; but, as a fact, the average woman can read him like a book."

She shook her head incredulously, her eyes intent on her line.

"You're throwing dust in my eyes now," she laughed. "True, your surface emotions are an open book to us;

but there are strata below to which we cannot penetrate. When a woman is humble, she means it; with a man it is mostly mock."

"O, generation of hypocrites that we are!" said Keith solemnly. "No wonder chivalry is dead!" and he plucked at the moss beside him with apparent unconcern.

Glancing sidewise, he could see a wave of colour rise from her neck to the roots of her hair and the tip of her small ear. She rose to her feet and began to wind in her line, all her timidity and lightheadedness forgotten. Erect and lissome she stood with chin uptilted slightly, balancing herself with ease on the mossy footing like some veritable nymph of the stream. Keith after the first moment of surprise rose also.

"I think that I shall have to go after Dicky and see if he is having any better luck than I am," she said, and her voice and glance were cold. "I fear our talking is frightening the fish. I am keeping you from getting across too," she said as she turned her back and walked slowly but with conscious dignity along the log to the bank, followed by the crestfallen Keith.

"I thank you for your kind assistance, but I must not keep you from your stroll," and, with a slight bow, she turned to walk up stream.

As Keith turned down through the trees, Cæsar appeared with his tongue hanging out fresh from the chase of some rabbit or other forest denizen and looked up in his master's face for sympathy and greeting.

"Cæsar, my boy," said Keith, "the daughter of the housekeeper has snubbed us, deliberately and of intention! What do you think of that now?"

The brightness, somehow, seemed to have gone out of the sunshine and the woods looked chill and uninviting.

He thought he would not now go to Bolton's seeing he had heard the latest as to the invalid's health; and so, he slipped back across the stream and went home to his book and his fireside.

CHAPTER IX

There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER the parting with Mr. Leicester, Marjorie walked with her head in the air as rapidly along the bank of the stream as was possible without entangling her rod and line in the foliage of the trees. The first impulse of her anger past, she began to think that she had been somewhat hasty in administering such a decided snub for such a comparatively trivial offence. After all, considered without prejudice it was rather neat the way he had worked it in; and altogether the little conversation had been a pleasant break in the afternoon's monotony. Mr. Leicester had talked rather well too and had not used any of that tone of condescension which had been evident on the night he had driven her up.

The train of her thoughts, however, was rudely interrupted by a tremendous war-whoop that came from the midst of a hollow tree, from out of the mossy trunk of which burst Dick brandishing an improvised tomahawk after the approved style of Cooper's redskins. Marjorie knowing what was expected, quickly sank on her knees to plead for mercy and was immediately scalped. This operation having been satisfactorily completed and the quivering victim having risen to her feet, the redskin became the small boy again and resumed his normal manner.

"Gee, I thought I'd scare you that time," he cried exultantly. "Didn't see me at all, did you?"

"A fine fright you gave me," said Marjorie smiling. "But what about the fish? Have you caught any?"

"Bet I have," said Dick; and, going behind the tree, he brought forth a bundle and, quickly untying the white cloth around it, exhibited five fine trout, the largest about nine inches long. "Guess Mother'll be glad. She'll like them all right, won't she?"

"Why, those are beauties; I'm sure she will be delighted. Poor me, didn't catch a thing," lamented Marjorie.

"Too bad; but girls can't catch fish—leastways," he added, fearing to hurt her feelings, "they don't try much round here."

"Mr. Leicester seemed to have the same opinion about us. Dick," and her voice became very solemn; "do you think it is a nice thing to do—do you think Chivalry would have done it—to leave a young woman sitting all alone on a narrow log in the middle of a stream when she is just as likely to fall in as not?"

Dick looked up into her face to see if she was serious.

"Aw, go on now," he said unable to determine; "you weren't afraid, were you?"

"Oh, but I was though," said Marjorie; "I thought that I would have to creep back on my hands and knees."

The shade of trouble on Dick's face cleared away in a flash and he grinned.

"Gee! I'll bet Mr. Leicester came along and helped you over. I saw Cæsar chasing a rabbit and I thought he wouldn't be far away."

Marjorie frowned, but the frown quickly melted into a smile.

"Oh no, he didn't; although he was there and I dare

say would have done so had the occasion arisen. The greater fear conquered the lesser and so there was no need."

Dick pondered the meaning of this speech for a space as he chewed the end of a succulent spear of grass.

"You don't like him much, do you?" he said.

"I? Why should I like him or dislike him? I don't take to his manners though. He is too conceited and superior; but small boys shouldn't be so inquisitive."

Dick chuckled.

"Funny, isn't it, he thinks you're our hired girl. I'd like to see his face if I was to tell him that Mother was once your nurse and that you lived in a beautiful castle like the Sleeping Beauty. I don't think he is a bit conceited though;" he went on more seriously, "he's always been jolly good to me."

Marjorie made a gesture of alarm.

"Promise me, Dick, that you'll never tell him nor anybody else. It's a secret you know and it's only girls that are supposed not to be able to keep a secret."

"Trust me, honest injun," said Dick with a dignified air. "It's just like the story you were telling me about the princess in disguise that ran away from home dressed in rags like a beggar; and a prince fell in love with her and didn't know she was a princess till after he had married her. Gee!" and Dick's eyes gleamed at the prospect—"I wonder if Mr. Leicester will fall in love with you."

Marjorie blushed and this time the frown did not melt into a smile.

"I'm surprised at you, Dick," she said severely; "don't you know that it is very impolite for small boys to make such remarks as that. But it is time we were taking the trout to your mother," she broke off to get away from the delicate subject. "Perhaps if we fry them nicely in butter we shall tempt her to eat them."

"You're awful good to Mother, aren't you? I don't know what we'd a done if you hadn't come when you did. Mother was terribly bad and when that other girl came out and saw what a poor place we had and wouldn't stay, Dad just about gave up. We'd a had to sell the team to ha' paid her anyway; but Dad, he thought Mother would die if she didn't have some one that knew more about nursin' an' cookin' than he did."

The little face was grave at the remembrance.

"Say, did you ever pray to God an' get an answer right away? Well, I did. That night, Mother was worse with the worry and Dad was so blue he just couldn't eat. So before I went to bed, I just told God all about it and prayed and prayed that he would send some one to nurse Mother; and then, in the morning, just after breakfast, I saw you coming with Mrs. Dalrymple."

"And you think God sent me, do you, Dick?" and Marjorie's eyes were moist and her face was very solemn.

"Sure!" Dick nodded; "I just know he did."

"I hope he did, Dicky dear," said Marjorie earnestly after a moment's pause; "for if so, it takes a heavy load off my heart. When you're as old as I am, you'll know how hard it is sometimes to tell just what God wants us to do."

And they picked up the fish and went off home.

CHAPTER X

To walk together to the kirk
And all together pray;
While each to his great Father bends
Old men and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay.

COLERIDGE.

ON the morning of the Sunday following that of the fishing excursion, Marjorie and Dick set off afoot to attend service at the Brayton church.

The Boltons, Marjorie had discovered, had fallen out of the way of going to church altogether. It was two miles to Brayton and service was only held fortnightly by a minister who had his headquarters at Portlake and who preached at three different places. He was a Presbyterian and perhaps this was the reason, as the Boltons were Church of England, that they had never attended the services at Brayton. Marjorie was an Anglican too; but she was not so narrow in her creed but that she felt that it was her duty in the absence of a church of her own denomination to attend the best that was available. Besides she had become quite fond of the Presbyterian service when she had lived in Scotland.

The morning was a delightful one. Dew sparkled upon everything, upon the soft grass underfoot, upon the bracken shooting up in rank luxuriance on either side of the trail, upon the velvety sides of moss-covered logs that, here and there, thrust themselves out through the brush and upon

the delicate leaves of the alders shimmering in the morning sunlight. Blue-jays chattered and squawked overhead and squirrels twittered as they peeped out with bright, inquisitive eyes at the two passers-by. The air was full of dewy freshness and aromatic with the scent of pine and cedar filling the lungs like some elixir that was as different from ordinary air as wine is from water.

Sad to tell, however, Marjorie's spirits, in spite of all the glory and the freshness of the summer morning, were strangely out of harmony with it. There were still times when homesickness weighed heavily upon her. She could not but miss very keenly her circle of girlhood friends and she even found herself thinking tenderly of Wilfrid, her erstwhile fiancé and the playmate of her childhood. It was in the latter rôle rather than in the former, which had been forced upon her solely by Lady Angleside's machinations, that she liked to think of him; and she bore him no ill-will for the part he had played in it. Nay, her conscience often troubled her as to whether she had done right to run away and leave him as she had; and she wondered whether after all, Lady Angleside had been so mistaken in thinking the match so highly desirable.

Loneliness and hardships are stern taskmasters to whip the rebellious spirit into line and, truth to tell, the lot she had escaped did not at times seem quite so intolerable from the distance of the British Columbia forest as it had from the luxurious security of Mayfair. To one brought up as Marjorie had been, her life with the Boltons, while it entailed no real hunger or suffering, yet involved much that was distasteful and uncongenial to say the least of it. Mrs. Bolton's sickness on her arrival had made it necessary for her to take the most of the drudgery of the household on her shoulders and to one unaccustomed to it, this was no light task. Besides the cooking

and dish-washing, there was the milk to be cared for and twice a week the butter to be churned. Many and ludicrous, at first, had been the mistakes she made, but she was borne up by the urgency of the emergency and had met the situation with a pluck and good-humour that had won Dick's love and admiration as well as his parents' undying gratitude. The first bread she had tried to bake had been uneatable and for a few days they had all nearly starved; but before Mrs. Bolton was on her feet again, Marjorie had fairly well mastered the ordinary routine of the household.

Mrs. Bolton was still far from strong and Marjorie had considered it a point of honour to bear a fair share of the work even although the good woman often protested against it.

This morning things in general seemed to have got upon her nerves. Life seemed to be lacking in variety and the sordidness of the little tasks that now occupied her time seemed to have suddenly forced itself upon her with an increased potency. There were times when even the unpleasantness of having to sit at the table without a napkin and to dispense altogether with such a superfluity as butter-knives assumed a magnitude of importance to her irritated sensibilities which she felt was altogether out of perspective with the real triviality of the annoyance. At such times, however, it seemed impossible at the moment by her own volition to restore her perceptions to a proper focus. It was to her credit, nevertheless, that no matter how depressed her mood might be she forced herself to counterfeit cheerfulness so that the rest of the household might not suffer. Had there been only herself to consider, she would not, feeling as she did, have gone to church at all that morning; but Dick was looking forward to it and she would not disappoint him. It was to be a

special service as Dr. Ritchie from Vancouver was to preach and there was likely to be an unusually large attendance to hear the city minister.

But if Marjorie's spirits were low, there was no doubt about the exuberance of Dick's. However environment might have tended to restrain and to repress in him the care-free joy of childhood, it bubbled out of him in response to the slightest favourable influence. The novelty of the experience before him and the pleasure of Marjorie's company was enough to put a brighter sparkle in his hazel eyes and an extra spring into his step, so that as he walked along he seemed to be prancing like a cavalry charger to the music of the band.

No doubt, part of the exhilaration was due to the grandeur of his new suit, a gift from Marjorie purchased ready-made from the village store; and indeed, in the neat Oxford jacket and knickerbockers, Dick looked quite a different boy from the barefooted urchin of the faded khaki overalls. He was proud of his finery and in the knowledge that to-day, at least, he reflected no discredit on Marjorie. The latter had herself donned one of her prettiest dresses, a Bond Street creation, had Dick only known it, of a navy-blue trim-cut to the figure and garnished with rows of bright silver buttons. Her policeman's suit, Wilfrid had named it, when she first put it on, and Marjorie had chosen it to-day as being appropriate for the long walk through the woodland trail.

"Gee! I wish it was always Sunday," said Dick with a burst of enthusiasm, "and then there wouldn't be any school an' Dad wouldn't ever have to work. I s'pose that's what heaven'll be like, Marjorie, won't it? Nothin' to worry or fret about."

"I daresay it will, Dick," assented Marjorie somewhat

at a loss. There were times when she found Dick's questions were almost too much for her.

"You know, Mother says that there'll be streets paved with gold and we'll all wear golden crowns and sit among the angels a-playing harps and singing hymns for ever an' ever," he went on earnestly; "but somehow it don't just seem real-like to me. I'd ruther it was just in the woods like or in some ordinary town an' I don't think I could stand singing hymns all the time. You know the hymn you sang last Sunday night about the 'robes of white and crowns of glory:' everybody going round in sort of nighties and wearing golden crowns. Seems kind of funny, doesn't it? 'Tain't real-like, is it now? When I asked Mother about it, she was kind of puzzled herself an' said as how she wasn't sure as she would be comfortable doin' nothing but singing hymns all the time, in all that grandeur. It didn't seem natural for hard-working folk like her, she said."

Marjorie pondered for a space before replying. It is hard to choose words fitted to a child's mind on subjects such as these just as it is hard to adjust one's ideas so that they harmonise with the childish viewpoint.

"No, Dicky," she said earnestly at last, "we have given up that old idea of Heaven—we have out-grown it now although we still sing about it in some of the hymns. We think of it as a place for greater service, greater chances to do good. We must serve Jesus here and then, when we are called up there, we have just to continue in the good work. That is the only true happiness, just to know that we are doing something," and Marjorie smiled brightly down at the boy in spite of the heaviness at her heart. Hers was a personality that seemed to radiate sympathy and this formed a great part of her charm. No matter whom it might be she was talking to, friend or servant

or some chance acquaintance maybe by the wayside, or in a railway train, there was a graciousness in her manner, a suggestion of interest kindly and sincere, reaching out and enveloping the person she was speaking to that rarely failed to kindle a pleasant warmth of satisfaction in the object of it.

Dick appreciated the honour of having his remarks taken seriously but boylike he was shy of a discussion dealing with matters of religion. Homilies such as Marjorie's for small boys' ears most often seem to fall on stony ground; for the urchin, the more he is impressed the more likely he will be to change the subject with a suddenness as baffling as it is disconcerting.

This was what Dick did now, although Marjorie's words had really moved him, recognising as perhaps he did that here was the secret of her sunny helpfulness, her unselfish consideration for others.

"I wonder if Mr. Leicester will be there to-day?" he remarked as he picked up a stone and shied it at a too noisy blue-jay that was airing its opinions from a hemlock in front of them.

"I—I'm sure I hope not," said Marjorie in a slight accent of vexation. "He seems to be everywhere one goes;" but she was ashamed of herself for her pettishness. After all, there was only one house of worship available and it was rather hard to deny him attendance at it just for the sake of her prejudices. She found it rather hard to justify her dislike for him; but there it was and it is a woman's privilege to submit herself to the guidance of her intuitions. All the same, she felt reproved by Dick's silence which he only broke by again changing the subject.

When they arrived at the little wooden church which lay not far from the store at the corner of two roads, there

were a number of teams tied up before the door or along the fence; and Marjorie's apprehensions were justified for Mr. Leicester's was one of them. A number of people were clustered around chatting with one another waiting until it was time for service to begin; but Marjorie and Dick passed inside without lingering.

To Marjorie, accustomed to the beautiful, harmonious interiors of the English country churches with their dim, religious light transfused by richly-coloured stained-glass windows, the bald room with its plain wooden benches and bare plastered walls, its rude reading-desk which was all that answered for a pulpit and its three square windows of plain glass on either side and one at the end, came with something of a sense of shock. The outside with its white painted walls unrelieved by ornament of any kind except for the rude Gothic spire that served, at least to indicate the nature of the building, was crude enough; but it had not prepared her for an interior so absolutely devoid of all those æsthetic influences that help to produce a religious atmosphere about the worshipper. The only touch of brightness in the whole place was a large bouquet of roses in a vase on the top of the organ that stood to one side of the reading desk.

Mr. Leicester stood talking to two men on the other side of it. One of them was tall and distinguished-looking, his partially bald head emphasising the high, intellectual forehead and prominent, clean-cut features and it did not need the clerical costume to proclaim him to Marjorie as the minister from the city. The other man in an ordinary tweed suit, Dick whispered, was Mr. Rigby, the local clergyman. Mr. Leicester's face was turned towards the door and as Marjorie walked up the aisle, he smiled to her and then turned to say something to Mr. Rigby. The

latter then looked at her, too, and it seemed that it was of her that they were speaking.

She knelt for a moment before taking her seat and when she rose from her knees, she was surprised to see Mr. Rigby come down the aisle towards her.

"You are Miss Coon, are you not?" he said with a pleasant smile, holding out his hand. "Mr. Leicester was just telling me that you have lately arrived from England and he suggested that you might be able to help us out. As a matter of fact, we are in rather a difficulty to-day. Our organist is sick and I have only just found out, so that I was not able to get a substitute. Do you think that you could possibly manage to fill the breach for us? This is a special service we are having," he went on eagerly as Marjorie hesitated; "and I was particularly anxious that it would go off well. It would be too bad if it was spoilt for want of an organist, wouldn't it?" and he smiled persuasively.

"I shall be very glad," said Marjorie, her hesitation yielding before the earnestness of his appeal. "I have played in a church before, so I daresay I shall manage all right."

"Oh, thank you so much," he said greatly relieved. "I wonder—" he hesitated, "I wonder if you could possibly sing us a solo—it helps so much. There was a man from Portlake, a tenor that I hoped would come but he has disappointed me—went fishing instead, I'm afraid. Almost anything would do, indeed the simpler the better. We are hardly educated up to some of the things they have in the city churches—vocal gymnastics, I call them, nothing to carry the soul above on wings of song, as it were—but I'm sure that we would appreciate anything that you would give us."

Marjorie looked around at the congregation, about forty

perhaps there were, of all ages. The men, stolid-looking and uncouth, feeling awkward in their Sunday clothes; the women most of them careworn, their faces lined with the unceasing struggle to make both ends meet; but on all was the look of health and on most the peace that goes with a clear conscience and the knowledge of a useful life. They had come there to get away for a short time from the monotonous grind of their daily toil, to be lifted if possible out of the grim realism of it and to catch a glimpse of a higher and purer life, of a promised land which some day they might hope to enter upon. Not for them, she thought, the inspiration of noble architecture, triumphs in stone wrought by the labour of many hands under the controlling direction of master minds dedicated to the great task of building a house worthy for men to worship God in; not for them the beauties of costly carving and rich altar-cloths nor the exquisite harmonies of vested choirs and pealing organs to wean the mind away from worldly thoughts. Only this crude edifice hurriedly thrown together at some sacrifice by the common labour of all, and set on the skirts of the forest, yet being their very own it was, perhaps, as dear to them as any lofty-spired cathedral to its European worshippers. Here, in this little band of folks gathered together before her, was a faith strong enough to do without these æsthetic externals that to Marjorie had seemed such a necessary part of her religion. She was filled with a new humility as she looked at them and she hastened to assent to Mr. Rigby's request.

"I shall try, then," she said. "When do you want it?" she asked when he had thanked her.

"Oh, after the collection," he replied. "Perhaps you would take your place at the organ now. Our choir is a very small one and I shall introduce you. I am afraid

they have not come in yet," he said frowning a little as he walked rapidly over to the window, where he beckoned to a group of young people outside.

"They are inclined to be a little thoughtless at times," he remarked with a smile when he returned; "but they are a faithful little band all the same and don't often disappoint me. Here they are now," he said as four girls and three men entered and came towards them, the former giggling and whispering and the latter looking rather solemn and self-conscious as if feeling themselves under the critical eye of the congregation.

When Marjorie had been introduced to them all, they went up to the organ and Mr. Rigby began the service with the singing of a hymn. The organ had been a gift from a city church that had got a bigger one and it was much better than is usually found in a country church. Instead of being equipped with the ordinary pedals, it was blown from the side by a small boy who worked a handle up and down. The lower part of him was hidden from view and it was sometimes rather startling to a stranger to see his head bobbing up and down as if somebody was having a fit. However, the regular worshippers were used to the phenomenon and, of course, thought nothing of it. The choir sang with much spirit and goodwill if, at certain parts, the time was ragged and the tenors out of tune; and Marjorie experienced no difficulty with the simple accompaniments. She found a pleasure in playing and it was good to feel the keys under her fingers again. She had not had a chance to play since coming to the district. Only she missed the beautiful liturgy of her own church.

After the collection had been taken up, Mr. Rigby turned round to her and smiled, and she saw that she would have to carry out her promise. She felt nervous about it as she would have to play her own accompaniment; and

she was doubtful whether, when sitting down, her voice would be sufficiently powerful. She had often sung in the village church at home; but this was an ordeal very different and for a moment she had a touch of stage-fright. The people were nearly all strange to her and she to them and, for a brief space, their presence sitting there waiting, seemed to awe and unnerve her. It was with faltering fingers that she struck the opening notes of the accompaniment of "There Is a Green Hill Far Away," to Gounod's beautiful setting and her voice trembled as she started to sing. She had chosen this as it was one of her favourites. For the devotional tenderness and simplicity of the words recalling the supreme sacrifice of Calvary as well as for the exquisite harmony of the setting, she felt it was most likely to appeal to the tastes of those present. After all, she was thinking, what need of noble edifice of stone or rich carvings within when such had been the humble origin of the faith they followed. After the first few notes, all timidity vanished and her voice rang out clear and confident, vibrant with sympathy for the theme, touching the hearts of the audience with a sense of joy and peace. They listened, even the little children, as if spellbound; and when the singer had sung the last few lines:

"And we must love him, too,
And trust in his redeeming love,
And try his works to do,"

there was a distinct hush for a space all over the room. For Marjorie, there was no longer any feeling that she was an alien among strangers, that these people before her had no common interest in her; but she felt drawn to them by the bond of a common faith and a common Saviour.

After the uplift of the music, it came almost with a sense of shock, of coming down to earth again after a celes-

tial sojourn when Dr. Ritchie gave out the text for his sermon; yet it was not long before the speaker with his expressive, resonant voice and his earnest and impassioned delivery, carried his hearers up again. His was a common enough theme. He based it upon the story of the Apostle Paul's imprisonment, showing how our apparent misfortunes and limitations are really often the means of our greatest success, often the stepping-stones to our highest usefulness. Paul's misfortune brought him to Rome where in spite of his bonds, he was enabled to preach the gospel and to such purpose, that the range of his converts reached even to the household of Cæsar himself. So it was with many of us, the preacher argued. Our dearest plans were frustrated, our choicest hopes disappointed and yet often on looking back we were able to see that what we had regarded as our greatest afflictions had been often really blessings in disguise, had really ministered to our ultimate good.

It was a simple and yet an eloquent sermon rich in apt illustration and full of optimism and encouragement and Marjorie was wonderfully cheered by it. She felt that her depression of the morning had lifted and a new feeling of peace and contentment had come in its place.

At the close of the service, Mr. Rigby was lavish in his expressions of thanks; and hastened to introduce her to Dr. Ritchie who was warm in his praises of her singing. The words of appreciation were pleasant to her and she walked down the aisle and out the front door with the latter chatting as they went. Here they found Mr. Leicester and Dick standing by the democrat waiting. It had been arranged that Dr. Ritchie was to dine with the former and he had the horses untied ready to go.

When Keith saw Marjorie coming towards him, he was seized with a sudden embarrassment as he did not know

on what footing their acquaintanceship stood. When they had parted a week ago, she had snubbed him unmistakably; but under the circumstances, he was quite willing to overlook it. There was something about the girl that had appealed to him and the feeling had not been lessened by her performance during the service. He was passionately fond of music and perhaps no one in the church had enjoyed her solo more than he. He lifted his hat and his first impulse was to shake hands; but he was afraid of being repulsed and the movement was arrested almost ere it was begun. Marjorie herself was ill at ease. She had quite forgiven him for his presumption of a week past; but, remembering the position she was supposed to occupy in the Bolton household, her pride was sensitive and here, before a third party, she was doubtful as to how he would act towards her. First impressions are often hard to get rid of and hers had been that Mr. Leicester was a snob. She had been inclined to revise this estimate after their meeting at the creek but still she was not sure. She felt now that this meeting in the presence of the city minister would put him to the test.

On the alert, therefore, as she was for any sign of condenscension, it was not surprising that when she noticed the awkwardness of his greeting and the apparent constraint of his manner, she should judge him for the worst. She only bowed to him stiffly, therefore, and with a smile and a good-bye to Dr. Ritchie, she turned away.

"Come along, Dick," she said to the boy who was looking on with a shade of disappointment in his eyes. He had no hankering to walk all the way home when there was a chance to ride in Mr. Leicester's democrat.

"One moment, Miss Coon," Keith called out, however, not as yet altogether repulsed by her chilling reception of him. "We shall be glad to drive you home if you will let

us. It will not take us far out of our way, and I am sure that Dr. Ritchie is not very hungry."

Had Marjorie had a moment or two in which to reflect or had she been mistress of herself as on ordinary occasions, she would probably have accepted; but she had to answer at once and she was extremely embarrassed. So, she turned around to face the speaker, blushing painfully.

"Thank you very much, indeed," she said somewhat coldly in her cultured English accent, "but Dickie and I would prefer to walk. It is very kind of you all the same."

Poor Dick was about to open his mouth to voice his protest; but when Keith lifted his hat and bowed in acquiescence, he changed his mind and trotted somewhat ruefully after Marjorie.

"She is a charming young lady that," said Dr. Ritchie as he climbed into the wagon after his host; "and she has a beautiful voice. She must be fond of walking surely if she has far to go."

But Keith answered him without enthusiasm and quickly changed the subject. He was annoyed at his own gaucherie and he was incensed at Miss Coon's ungraciousness; and it required of him a very considerable effort to throw off his preoccupation and make himself agreeable to his guest.

CHAPTER XI

Comus. . . . I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage where you may be safe
Till further quest.
Lady *Shepherd, I take thy word,*
And trust thy honest-offer'd courtesie,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
With smoaky rafters, than in tapstry halls.

Milton.

One afternoon a few days after the service at Brayton, Marjorie had volunteered to fetch a setting of Plymouth Rock eggs for Mrs. Bolton from a Mrs. Dickson who had some prize poultry on a small place some three miles away. It lay only about a mile and a half distant in a straight line but there was a mountain between and one had to take a roundabout road to get to it. There was a trail through the woods that skirted the eastern shoulder of the mountain; but, although Marjorie had been over it once with Dick on one of the long walks they often took together, Mrs. Bolton had advised her to go round by the road rather than risk losing her way in the bush.

It was a long, hot walk and on her arrival at her destination, Mrs. Dickson insisted on showing her all her fowls and the excellently-planned domestic arrangements that had been made for them. The good lady was an enthusiast on the poultry business and seemed to enjoy extremely expounding her up-to-date methods to Marjorie, who was too good-natured not to show herself a sympathetic listener. Indeed, Marjorie did find it interesting

and it was quite a revelation to her to see how methodically everything was arranged and how carefully Mrs. Dickson managed to keep check on the productive activities of each individual bird. By an ingenious arrangement, the nests were so contrived that the hens could enter them at will; but once in, they could not get out again until released by their mistress. Each hen was marked with a number and, on being released after having laid, the egg was marked down to its credit in a book kept for the purpose. So, the unprofitable birds were discovered and sent to the butcher while the good layers were retained.

"I should think that the hen would be inclined to resent such an inquisitive arrangement," said Marjorie smiling: "and that it would either refuse to enter the nests at all and lay outside or that, just to spite you, it would lay fewer eggs."

"Oh, bless your heart, miss, they never resent nothin', hens don't," answered Mrs. Dickson contemptuously. "They hain't got brains enough to think it out. So long as they gets their vittles, that's all they care about. Now if it was turkeys, I wouldn't be so sure. I had a turkey gobbler here last year that, when he was around, I didn't dare to call my soul my own. If he wasn't the knowingest thing!"

"Was he vicious?" asked Marjorie as her hostess turned to shoo away a flock of young ducks that with outstretched necks were following her in the hope that suppertime had come around.

"Vicious! Well, I should say," she exclaimed emphatically. "I daren't come into the yard with him, the brute would fly at me so. I used to take a stick with me and wallop him with all my strength; but he simply didn't seem to feel it though he must have been sore. No, life wasn't worth living with him around, so he simply had

to go. Al—that's my husband"—and here the good lady laughed with evident enjoyment—"Al used to josh me an' say that that old gobbler was the only one that had ever been able to get the best of me and he, for one, took off his hat to him. He never lets it down on me yet. Ah, well, I guess the old bird made a good Christmas dinner for somebody; but if he hadn't had such a cantankerous disposition, he might have been struttin' around here yet. But you must have a cup of tea before you go."

By the time the tea had been made and disposed of, it was after four o'clock, and as it was so late, Mrs. Dickson suggested that Marjorie should return by the trail.

"I'll set you on your way for a mile or so; an' I guess there wouldn't be any danger of you missin' it then if you've been over it once," she declared. "Besides Al said the other day that it was blazed right through—it was when Mr. Rigby was here and he sent him through that way. Quite a good piece of it is skid-road anyway."

Marjorie was not very sure about it but she was loath to go back the way she had come if the short cut was practicable. She was feeling rather tired and the time had passed quicker than she had thought so that it would make her late in getting home. Therefore she accepted the suggestion and Mrs. Dickson's offer to go with her part of the way; and the two set off together.

The first part of the way led over a skid-road that was being used for hauling out shingle-bolts to the river and which went right through the Dickson place; and they had not gone far before they met a man driving a long, wooden sleigh loaded up with them. It seemed a tremendous weight for the two horses to draw but the skids had been copiously greased so as to decrease the friction; and as the haul was down hill as well, it slid along with a great deal of

creaking and groaning but much more easily than one might have expected.

"Drat them! I wish they were through with their old bolts," exclaimed Mrs. Dickson angrily. "I had to let them go through our land whether we wanted to or no; an' all the compensation they would pay us was ten dollars. Ten dollars for all that muss right along by the side of my chicken yards! Now, what do you think of that?" and she turned round to frown at the back of the receding teamster.

"But couldn't you have stopped them if you had wanted to?" asked Marjorie.

"Stopped them, no!" Mrs. Dickson snapped out. "We could have taken it to arbitration but much good that would have done. One of my neighbours tried it and all the compensation the arbitrators allowed her was three dollars and seventy-nine cents—three dollars and seventy-nine cents!" she repeated emphatically. "How they worked it out so close as that beats me! And mind you, they had offered her twenty dollars to settle but she wouldn't hear of less than a hundred. They got costs against her too and it took her more than a hundred herself to pay the arbitrators an' the lawyers an' all. I guess she felt pretty sick by the time she was through with it. Once you start to go to law, you never know where you're going to end up.

"But it's time I was turning back to get my man's supper ready," she broke off. "I think you will have no trouble now to find the way if you just watch the blaze-marks on the trees. Once you get over the hill, you soon come down to the road that goes up to Leicester's place and when you come to that you're all right. Just walk quietly and watch where you're going;" and with this parting word

of advice she bade Marjorie good-bye and turned to retrace her steps.

For a considerable way, the trail was fairly well marked and the girl stepped out blithely following it without difficulty by the blazing on the trees. Occasionally she would have to climb over the huge trunk of a fallen giant in the side of which a foothold had been cut out by an axe. All round her was the silence of the forest with its cloistered light filtered through the thick foliage overhead. Under foot the ground was soft and springy with its carpet of pineneedles and the air was deliciously cool and fragrant.

All at once, however, Marjorie was disturbed in her enjoyment of it all when she found that there were no more blaze-marks to guide her. She went on a little further thinking always that she would strike some more and all would be well but still there were none to be seen. She did her best to keep in the same direction as she had been heading but found it very difficult on account of having to go around fallen trees.

Getting alarmed, she decided to turn back to Mrs. Dickson's, feeling that that would be better than to run the risk of getting lost altogether; but to her dismay she found that she was unable to pick up again the trail that she had come over. However, in her efforts to find it, she came on a skid-road and she followed this thinking that it must bring her to someone who could set her on her way; but it ended abruptly at a pile of shingle-bolts. Then she started out to find the other end only to find after about ten minutes walking that she had come back to the point she had started from.

Visions of having to spend the night in the woods now passed through her mind and filled her with a numbing dread; and the forest that had seemed so friendly a short

time before now assumed a drear and sinister aspect. When we are unused to dwell with Nature, there is something indescribably dread and awful to be left alone with her against our will. It is like the child that is gleeful at the sight of the circus clown when his elders are beside him but who would shriek with horror if left with him in a room alone. We do not realise how far we city-dwellers have passed from our common mother till we find ourselves in some such predicament as that of Marjorie. A faint breeze sighed in the tree tops and she shivered ever so slightly thinking she had never heard it sound so melancholy. She could feel her heart beating wildly in her breast and she tried to calm the panicky sensation that had seized hold of her telling herself of the necessity to keep up her courage.

She sat down on a log and called as loudly as she could —Dick had taught her the Australian coo'ee—but only the echo came back. Her sharpened ears detected faint rustlings and twitterings of the wild life whose purlieus she had invaded—but except for these there was no answer to her call. She looked at her watch and saw that it was six o'clock; and she thought with longing of the pleasant supper table at home and of how they would be beginning to worry about her. No doubt, they would come to look for her; and she tried to laugh away her fears, calling herself a goose for being afraid when there was really nothing to be afraid of. There were occasional bears in these woods, she was aware but they were more or less harmless, playing havoc with the farmers' apple trees in fruit-time but that was all. Sometimes a cougar was shot or a wild-cat but these were not likely to attack a woman. It was rather the vague, indeterminate terrors of the darkness that she feared; or two-footed prowlers perhaps that might take advantage of her helplessness.

She rose to her feet again to have another try to recover the trail and wandered around until she was weary; but she only became more bewildered and foot-sore in the maze-like tangle. The underbrush had got thicker too and she found it much more difficult to move around in it. In her eagerness, she had grasped the branch of a prickly plant and got her hand full of the sharp thorns and it smarted very keenly. At last, she gave it up and decided to stay where she was until help came. She had read somewhere that when anyone was lost in the woods, the best thing that they could do was to remain where they were; because, when they wandered around, it made it doubly hard for their friends to find them. So she sat down on a moss-covered log and waited, calling out as loudly as she could, however, at short intervals. A chipmunk came and regarded her doubtfully and she amused herself by watching its antics until growing tired evidently of gamboling for her amusement. it disappeared at last up a tree.

How long would it be she wondered before Dicky and Mr. Bolton would come to look for her. They would probably go to Mrs. Dickson's first through the trail; and then they would learn that she had taken that way and must have got lost. By that time, it might be dark and it would not be easy penetrating the brush by lamplight. It was hard enough to get through some of it in the daytime as she had found from experience.

She had sat what had seemed hours, although in reality it was not so long, when she heard a faint answer to one of her calls. Eagerly she called again, and again she heard it plainly, a man's voice calling halloo. Without further hesitation, she hurried off in the direction of the sound and it was not long before the owner of the voice came in sight; an old man, he proved to be, with grey

beard and whiskers and cheeks ruddy with health but crinkly and furrowed as with long years of exposure to the ripening process of the elements. He wore overalls tucked into lumberman's half-boots and a black shirt thrown open at the chest and throat; and a black felt Fedora hat all twisted and out of shape and with a hole in the crown through which a grey wisp of hair protruded, completed his costume. He carried an axe over his shoulder and was smoking a corn-cob pipe, which he pulled from his mouth when he had come near enough to Marjorie to distinguish her. He was evidently short-sighted for he screwed up his features making them more crinkly than ever as he stared in evident wonder and astonishment. His first words proclaimed his nationality as well as the deep, rich brogue in which they were uttered.

"Begorra thin if it ain't a feymale! Well if that don't bate creation I'm a nigger!"

"I've lost my way," said Marjorie plaintively seeing that he was evidently too much overcome to address her. His appearance was uncouth enough but somehow she was reassured by the sound of his voice, which had an honest intonation although it was curiously high-pitched.

"Lost your way, have ye, miss? Shure thin it's mesilf that's sorry to hear it," he exclaimed sympathetically, taking a puff at the corn-cob; "but ye gave me quite a turn, hollerin' the way ye did as if ye were the banshee. Divil a fut would I have come near ye if it hadn't been that ye were between me an' my supper. But which way were ye goin', miss?"

"I live with the Boltons," Marjorie replied; "and I have been over at Mrs. Dickson's and she advised me to take the trail instead of going all the way round by the road. Do you think you could take me home?" Her

voice was trembling a little and she was beginning to feel a slight faintness.

The man laid down his axe and pushed back his battered hat in order to scratch his grizzled locks while he regarded his questioner with a puzzled air.

"You see I was to have been home long ago," Marjorie went on anxiously; "and I know they will be worrying about me."

"Bedad thin they deserve to worry, miss, for lettin' such a swate bit ov a colleen as yersilf out alone in the bush like this. But ye nayd n't be afraid at all now that I've found ye for I'll take ye home as soon as we can get a bit ov supper—but not a minute before, so ye nayd n't ask me," he added as Marjorie opened her mouth to speak. "I've a little cabin close by and you'll be as safe takin' supper with me as you would be with the King of Great Britain and Oireland. I have n't had a hot bite since six o'clock this mornin' an' not for the old Queen hersilf wad I wait another hour for my supper, so ye can just come along an' we'll be there in a jiffy."

Without further discussion, he took up his axe and leaving Marjorie to follow, he led the way through the trees. There was nothing for her to do but to accompany him unless she was willing to stay where she was; and, with the darkness fast coming down, she did not hesitate a minute. The man seemed honest enough and she was badly in need of a rest and refreshment before starting out on the homeward journey. She felt that she fully sympathised with his unwillingness to wait any longer for his evening meal. So she followed meekly and in a short space they reached a rude log cabin set on the bank of a deep ravine from whence came the continuous murmur of running water. Throwing open the door he ushered her in and lighted a lamp that stood on a rude table over

against the wall. She sank into a chair with a deep sigh of relief, while her host looked her over curiously, his little eyes blinking in the glare of the lamplight. Marjorie was growing very uneasy under his uncanny stare and she was beginning to find the silence unbearable when at last he broke it.

"You pore darlint," he said, "I can see by the white face ov ye that ye're all tired out an' ye're naydin' a drop ov the cratur. There's nothin' loike it at all whin ye're feelin' a bit faint loike;" and taking a bottle and a glass from a box that was nailed to the wall to serve as a cupboard, he poured her out a stiff draught and made her drink it down.

"Ye nayd n't be afraid, it'll not make ye tipsy," he assured her. "Ye'll feel better after that. Now I'll be for fryin' a bit ov bacon and brewin' a dish ov tea and when ye've got that ye'll be feelin' ready to start for home."

The strong spirits while it nearly choked her, revived Marjorie almost immediately and feeling reassured as to her host's good intentions, while he was preparing the meal, she glanced curiously around the room, so different from anything she had ever experienced. The walls had no interior lining but were the plain logs unadorned. Here and there, nails were driven as pegs to hang things on, a miscellaneous collection, garments of various kinds, towels of grimy hue, a cracked mirror, an alarm clock, a gun and a long two-handled saw being among the most conspicuous items. A cook-stove stood in the middle of the room and this with the table and one or two wooden chairs besides the rocker Marjorie was sitting in completed the furniture. A sort of loft above was reached by a rude ladder made of two vine-maple poles with spars nailed across and served as a sleeping chamber.

It was wonderful to see how quickly and expeditiously

the old man set about getting the supper ready. First, he lit the fire and then went outside for a minute and returned with a bucketful of water from which he filled his kettle. He then set the table from the box cupboard on the wall, opened a can of condensed cream and one of marmalade. Then he put the frying-pan on the stove and produced a large chunk of bacon from which he cut a number of slices and put them in the pan. By the time the bacon was ready, the water was boiling and a granite-ware teapot was brought out in which he made tea; and then, placing a chair for Marjorie, he invited her to "sit in and have a bite." The whole thing was done with a swiftness and economy of effort that was a revelation to one unused to the handiness of the lone frontiersman.

"'Tis but a poor meal that I'm offerin' ye, miss," he apologised as he poured the tea; "but at the laste, ye should have a rare good appetite. They're not far in the wrong that say that hunger is the bist sauce. I wad have made ye some flapjacks only that ye're in such a hurry to get home again and I know that ye'll be onasy to be off."

"Indeed, your bacon smells most deliciously," said Marjorie; "and your bread looks as if it had come from the baker's," she added, helping herself to a slice. "Flapjacks—those are what we call pancakes, aren't they? I've heard Dick Bolton speak of them. I had no idea you woodsmen were such good cooks."

"We ain't hardly to be reckoned cooks," he replied modestly, but evidently pleased at the appreciation; "we're a bit too rough-and-ready for that but what vittles we do have are plain an' satisfyin' an' hain't ruinous to our insides like the foine folks have. Many's the toime I've sat at this here table with a plate ov bacon before me an'

a bowl full of flapjack batter at hand so as I could keep the fryin'-pan full—and bedad I could make them just as fast as I could ate them—an' I wouldn't have traded my supper, miss, for the bist you could buy in the land,—or in Dublin itsilf for that matter. You're from the ould country yersilf by yer spache, miss, if I may make so bould?"

"Yes, I was born in Edinburgh though I have lived most of my life in the south of England," Marjorie replied. She was beginning to feel more at home with her host and she had now lost all fear of him.

"An' I'm suspictin' ye've come out to this counthry to get married, miss, jist loike all the rist ov them?" he questioned with a contortion of the features that Marjorie guessed was meant to convey a wink.

"Oh no, quite the contrary," she replied blushing in spite of herself. She felt that as it was evident there was no rudeness intended, there was nothing to gain by standing on her dignity. If Doty could only see me now, she thought, how amused she would be.

The old man was looking at her with growing approval between large bites of bread and bacon and copious draughts of tea from an earthenware bowl, Marjorie having been honoured with the one cup that the establishment boasted.

"Ye'll not have long to wait here annyway," he said; "before ye'll be snapped up. Girls loike you ain't so plintiful, belave me; an' if I were jist thirty years younger I wouldn't be slow ov askin' ye mesilf.

"There must be some loikely young lads round about Boltons' place though," he went on. "There's young Scott that has the place the other side ov him—him that has the thrasher; an' there's Mr. Leicester that has the place this side of the creek. He's got a good ranch an' money

in the bank too; an' a right smart lad he is. There's not anny of them that would care to thread on his coat-tail."

"I've met Mr. Leicester," said Marjorie. Her interest was aroused although she did not relish the turn the conversation had taken. "Is he not one of these Englishmen who take up ranching to give them an excuse to idle their time away?"

"Divil a bit, miss; not Mr. Leicester. An' there ain't none of the haw-haw business about him. He's just as frindly and free-and-easy as you and me; but still he ain't the sort o' chap as one could take anny—so-to-speak—liberties with. Did ye iver hear tell of how he fooled the lunatic that was livin' up in the old Mills shanty?"

"No, I never heard of it. What was it?" Marjorie asked.

"This lad, ye see, had gone crasy loike with livin' so much by himsilf an' takin' too much booze; an' he was prowlin' round by night kind ov wild, scarin' women and children until they were all afeared to go out alone. Ov course, ye see, miss, that couldn't go on now, could it? an' pretty soon the Provincial police sint up a couple ov min to arrest the pore chap an' take 'im down to the asylum. They wint first to Mr. Leicester, as he was one ov the Police commissioners, to find where the man lived—an' Mr. Leicester gave thim their directions an' sint them off."

He pushed back his plate and passed the back of his hand across his mouth as an indication that he had finished eating; and then he leaned back in his chair and pulled the corn-cob pipe from his pocket and filled it.

"With your permission, miss," he said with an airy wave of the hand; "give me just tin minutes an' I'll be riddy to start." Marjorie having graciously assented, he struck a match on his trousers and gravely lighted up, taking one or two preliminary draws before resuming his tale.

"They do say as they wint off laughin' an' joking jist

like two kids to a circus; but they were n't long or they were back with their tails between their legs, so to spake, miss. They had found that to take old Bill wasn't annything like the picnic-jaunt they had expicted it to be. The old boy had got wind o' their comin' an' he was sittin' waitin' for them with a shotgun. They didn't go near enough fer to find out if it was loaded ayther. There was a look ov detirmination about 'im sittin' there on a sawhorse that stood outside the cabin door that suddinly made thim feel the greatest respect for 'im; an' they decided very quickly that it would niver do to break in on 'is privacy, not that day, at laste.

"Well, miss, they tried it a second time thinkin' that they would sneak up an' take him unawares; an' they did get inside the house but they were soon out agin. They niver tould annyone just what happened; but they came back a good deal faster than they had gone which said a lot for ould Bill's powers ov persuasion, miss.

"So, they wint back to town sayin' they would report the matter at headquarters and see what could be done about it. Nothin' was done, however, an' Bill he was left in peace for a while till one night he chased the Wilkins girls an' near scared them out ov their wits. Thin ould man Wilkins complained to Mr. Leicester and said what a disgrace it was that the counthry should be terrorised in that way. There was Mr. Leicester, he said, a justice of the peace an' he hadn't done a thing about it an' let on as he ought to be ashamed ov himsilf, bearin' the sword of office in vain—he had been a Baptist deacon, had old Wilkins, an' he used to talk as if he was preachin' a sermon most ov the time.

"Mr. Leicester tould him as how it wasn't his fault—Joe Westcott, that's him as is the policeman for this municipality, you see, miss, he was sick with pneumonia—an'

although he had asked the Provincial Police to take action, their men had gone back in disgust without makin' the arrist on account of the gineral on-healthiness ov the job.

"'Why don't ye do it yersilf thin?' says old Wilkins. 'You're responsible for the protiction ov this here community, hain't ye? You're afeared, that's what. Why don't you swear in some spicial constables an' git thim to hilp ye? Are we all goin' to be murdered by this madman just because you hain't got the gumption to carry out your duties?'

"I heard ivery word, miss, because I was standin' right there whin he said it—I was hilpin' Mr. Leicester blow some stumps on that last tin-acre patch he cleared up.

"You could see he was kin' ov angry by the way his eyes flashed but he ain't the one to break out whin he's mad—he jist gets the more quiet and cool. Just like blasting powder, miss—that's a box ov it there sittin' under the table—it's very quiet and harmless until somethin' makes it go off an' thin there's somethin' doin'. He just looked at old Wilkins sort ov resintful loike while you might count tin, say, an' thin he says: 'No, Mr. Wilkins, it wasn't exactly that I was afraid; but I was hopin' the old chap might get better or the thing might blow over. Seein' he had put up such a good fight for his liberty and had routed the police temporarily, I thought that there would be no harm in lettin' the matter lie to see if he didn't keep quiet. Of course, this affair of his chasing your daughters makes it necessary to act at once.'

"'Suppose, thin, actin' on your suggistion, I swear you in as a special constable and we'll go right up there now and arrist him.' Faith, miss," and the old logger's eyes were gleaming at the remembrance as he filled up his pipe again, "ye should ov seen ould Wilkins shrink and shrivel up whin he said that. Divil a bit o' bounce was lift in

'im. Him go up there an' take the chances of bein' shot by that ould crazy man—not loikely! He had a family, he had, an' his loife wasn't to be loightly thrown away.

"'I'm very sorry that you can't see your way to help me, Mr. Wilkins. I suppose I shall have to do the job alone thin?'

"Old Wilkins, he jist gasped loike a fish out ov the water.

"'Alone! You're niver goin' to try it alone?' says he. 'Why you'll be shot if you do.'

"'One has to risk something for the good ov the community you know,' says Mr. Leicester smilin' kind o' quiet loike. 'By-the-way, is that pinto pony of yours still as lame as ever?'

"'Every bit,' answers Wilkins kind o' taken aback. 'An what ov it?' says he.

"'Oh,' says Mr. Leicester, 'I've niver met this old man but I understand he's pretty fond ov a horse. Quite a good hand at doctorin' thim too.'

"'So I believe,' says Wilkins.

"'Well,' says Mr. Leicester, 'I'd like to borrow him from you for the afternoon if you'll bring him round after dinner. I'll pay you for any damage that may come to him.'

"'What you goin' to do with him?' asks Wilkins kin' o' suspicious-loike.

"'You'll see if you loike to come along with me,' says Mr. Leicester. 'Will you bring him or will you not because I can get one from Andrew Speedie I know?'

"'Oh, I'll bring him all right,' says Wilkins.

"Well, miss, to make a long story short, Mr. Leicester took this old pinto that was limpin' awful bad, an' he led it right up to that old man tho' he was sittin' waitin' for 'im just as he did for the gumshoe-min from town.

He purtinded to be encouraging ov the baste an' kin' of helpin' him along; an' he didn't pay no attintion to the ould man an' his shot-gun till he came right up beside 'im. Thin he turns an' tells him that he'd heard what a fine 'vet' he was and would he see what he thought about that pony's leg. Mr. Leicester niver let on that he saw the gun but was purtindin' that he was so interested in the sufferin's of the baste that he didn't see no gun. The ould man's fingers were twitchin' an' 'is eyes were wild—I saw 'im mysilf after Mr. Leicester brought 'im down an' I never saw a more fearsome-lookin' object with 'is long hair an' beard an' the foam a-gatherin' round his mouth—but as Mr. Leicester kept a talkin' away koind o' quiet loike about splints an' spavins and sich, the ould chap began to get quieter an' take notice. Pretty soon, he laid down his gun an' wint over to the blissid pinto that was standin' on three legs, poor brute, an' he knelt down to feel of the lame leg. Thin just at that moment, Mr. Leicester jumped on him loike a flash an' got 'im down on his back. The ould man fought loike a wildcat; but Mr. Leicester after a bit ov a struggle managed to git the bist ov him an' was able to get a bit ov rope round his wrists an' after that it was asy.

"Ye should a seen ould Wilkins' face whin he saw Mr. Leicester comin' back with the lunatic beside him.

"No, miss, I ain't easily scared mysilf—but, I wouldn't ov tackled that job that day for all the gold in British Columbia," and he rose and knocked the ashes out of his pipe into the stove. "I'm a terrible one to talk once I get a-going," he said apologetically. "You'll be wantin' to get started for home an' I guess now I'm ready. We'll take a lantern with us an' it won't take long to get you back to your fireside again."

"That's a very interesting story," said Marjorie rising

and putting on her hat; "and you describe it very graphically. It was a plucky thing to do."

The tale had appealed strongly to her imagination and she found her thoughts recurring to it persistently as she followed in the footsteps of her guide by the light of the lantern which he carried. The hero of it was the man that she had twice snubbed out of the four times she had met him; and she was feeling a little uneasy as to the part she had played. She had meant to assert her dignity and she was afraid that instead she had only succeeded in being rude. The story had given her a better opinion of Mr. Leicester but her own self-esteem had suffered correspondingly in the process.

They had not gone very far before they saw a light coming towards them through the trees and soon Bolton and Dicky met them with the heartiest expressions of joy. They had gone to Mrs. Dickson's as Marjorie had surmised; and when they learned that she had taken the trail, they at once guessed what had happened and started out to look for her.

Marjorie introduced her rescuer although she had to ask his name to do so. Then she parted from him with warm expressions of her gratitude for his kindness and hospitality and she promised to come and see him again some day with Dick.

"Be sure that ye do thin, miss," he said, highly pleased, the light of the lantern throwing his crinkly features into strange lights and shadows grotesquely gargoyle-like in their quaintness; "an' I'll give ye both the bist fryin' o' flapjacks wid maple syrup that ye've iver had in yer loives."

With a wave of his hand in farewell, he took his way back to his solitary cabin.

CHAPTER XII

Fairies, black, grey, green, and white,
You moonshine revellers, and shades of night.

SHAKESPEARE.

Her sweet arms were unfolded on the air,
They seemed like floating flowers the most fair—
White lilies the most choice;
And in the gradual bending of her hand
There lurked a grace that no man could withstand;
Yea, none knew whether hands, or feet, or voice,
Most made the heart rejoice.

A. O'SHAUGHNESSY.

ONCE having heard about Peter Pan and the fairies, nothing would satisfy Dick Bolton but a fuller initiation into these mysteries. Brought up among matter-of-fact people, his imaginative nature had been starved of its birthright and it responded with all the greater eagerness to the glimpses of an ideal world which Marjorie opened up to it. The realm of magic that lay behind the words, "let's pretend," was one that he entered into with the fullest abandon of joy.

Marjorie herself, despite her twenty years, was nothing loath to be his cicerone. After cooking and washing dishes and caring for the invalid, for Mrs. Bolton's health was slow in mending, it was a pleasant relaxation after the evening meal was over and the day's work done, to put her wits to work and draw upon the treasures of her fairy lore to pander to Dicky's new appetite. They did not find the house with its small rooms a congenial place for their pur-

pose, however, so they used to steal out together down the trail towards the creek when the moon was shining; or out through the clearing under the bright stars when there was no moon. Down by the creek, there was a fine, level, park-like stretch which they had discovered was just the place for fairies to dance in; and there were two old cedar stumps, to which with some difficulty Dick had managed to set fire. These were to furnish the light for some wonderful high jinks that Marjorie had promised to perform for Dick, if he would be specially conscientious with his chores and do all he could to help his father.

So it happened that one night as Keith was returning home from a call upon a man who lived a mile north of Bolton's place, he was surprised to hear the sound of singing as he threaded his way along the winding trail where it came down towards the bed of the creek. He had noticed the burning stumps as he had passed through in the afternoon but in the clear light of day they had shown but faintly. Now, however, through the dark they flared out with a lurid glow, throwing into sharp relief the thick tracery of the intervening boughs and foliage. The air was familiar to him and he recognised the opening chorus of "Iolanthe," the words sounding forth distinctly in a clear rich soprano voice:

"We are dainty little fairies,
Ever singing, ever dancing,
We indulge in our vagaries
In a fashion most entrancing;
If you ask the special function
Of our never-ceasing motion,
We reply without compunction,
That we haven't any notion,
Tripping hither, tripping thither,
Nobody knows why or whither,
We must dance and we must sing,
Round about our fairy ring!"

Keith, like Tam O' Shanter had "ventured forward on the licht" and like him, too, found his eyes enriched with an amazing spectacle. Right on an open space of sward between two blazing stumps, a fairy was dancing before an audience of one small boy who squatted on the ground with his arms clasped around his knees and still as if spell-bound. The fairy was not dressed with the customary scantiness of traditional fairy costume yet danced with an airy lightness and a sinuous grace. Her arms were bare and her dark hair flowed down about her shoulders while her gown of some light material reaching to her ankles followed the delicate lines and curves of her willowy figure.

"Gee! but that was fine," said the small boy, as he clapped his hands. "Do some more, please."

The dance had come to a close with the song, and the dancer stood smiling at the enthusiasm of the audience.

"You must remember," she explained, "that I am surrounded by other fairies who are my subjects and who are all dancing too. You can see me because I am half a mortal and only half a fairy but you can't see them at all. But that's enough for the fairies to-night. Now I'll give you a bit of Grand Opera.

"There was a little girl, the daughter of a great noble who was stolen from her home by a gipsy and brought up by the band; and when she grew up she had a lover and this is a song she sings to him. I'll sit down on this log and my lover is supposed to be sitting at my feet. You must make believe, you know, or you lose half the effect."

She sat down on the end of a log and sang "I dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls." Keith stood watching her spellbound. His conscience told him that he ought to turn away; but the temptation to remain was too great for him. As she began the familiar air from "The Bohemian

Girl," it carried him back to the last time he had heard it at Covent Garden over three years ago when the girl he was to have married was beside him. The memory had its poignancy of pain; and a feeling of sadness came over him as he listened to the beautiful air which was all the more effective because of the fine temperament that the singer displayed in the rendering. Her voice had all the assurance and finish of a well-trained artist and she took the trills with ease and sweetness.

Over the girl herself, as she sang the song, there had come a feeling of depression and homesickness. The dark shadows of the surrounding forest, flickering and changing with the flame of the burning tree-stumps all at once took on a sinister aspect drear and unfriendly; and the loneliness of her position away in this wild country far from everyone she knew came upon her all at once. The boldest of us only realise when we are parted from them, how much we are dependent for our happiness on the friends by whom we are surrounded, and how loss of them makes life barren and miserable. So when the song was finished, despite Dick's pleadings, she would not sing any more; but picked up her cloak and threw it around her.

"No, I'm tired now, Dicky, and I want to go back. We'll come some other night;" and the two walking abreast came down the trail. Keith had just time to step behind a large tree to let them go by. To have moved off quickly through the brush was to have courted discovery where every bush and stick had tongues of protest for the unwary stumbler; so he stood in the shadow and watched them pass. Then he slipped off down the trail and was just congratulating himself on having escaped so neatly when he heard Dick call out, "Hello, Cæsar, old boy! Where did you come from?"

"Confound that dog!" he exclaimed under his breath

in sore vexation. Dick would be sure to guess from Cæsar's presence that his master was not far away, he thought, and would tell Marjorie. The girl would most probably suspect that he had been playing the "peeping Tom" and would like him less than ever. He seemed to have been most unfortunate in the impression he had created every time that they had met although he had tried to be friendly enough; and now to crown all, there was this most annoying contretemps. However, he did not blame himself. It was not his fault that he had happened to pass by. After all, it was on his own land and no man with red blood in his veins could have turned away immediately. Why should Dick be the only one to enjoy the charming spectacle?

"I don't care!" he said to himself at last as he turned in by the garden gate. "Whether she guesses that I was there or not, I am glad I had a good look at the show. Might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb."

CHAPTER XIII

I saw he had a Bow,
And Wings, too, which did shiver;
And looking down below,
I spy'd he had a Quiver.

R. HERRICK.

IT was about a week after the event chronicled in the last chapter that as Keith was seated at his dinner his newspaper before him and Cæsar as usual on the hearth-rug, there was a faint knocking and Dicky Bolton entered. Keith had been planting potatoes all day and was enjoying the luxury of relaxation and Mrs. Dalrymple's good cooking after his hard toil. The boy fingered his cap nervously as he came forward but quickly forgot his shyness when Keith had set him down to a slice of apple pie. That he had something on his mind, however, was evident by the absent way in which he replied to the questions that were put to him. His mother was somewhat better, he said, though not able to be up; and his father had been working out with his team for a neighbour. He, himself, had been going to school although he could ill be spared from home.

"Marjorie's been doin' all the work at the house," he declared; "'cause she said I must n't stay away from school whatever happened. Mother wanted me to stay and I wanted to; but she just wouldn't let me. Mother just frets an' frets about her havin' to do so much; but we can't help it, can we, when we're so poor?"

"You're all very fond of Marjorie, are n't you?" said

Keith, not unwilling to have the boy talk about the hired girl.

"You kin just bet we are," and Dick's eyes shone with enthusiasm but his face clouded over again. "Say!" he went on with some embarrassment, "you know that there's a concert an' dance down at Portlake to-night an' Mother was wonderin' if you mebbe wouldn't ask Marjorie to go down to it. She ain't having any kind of a time with us at all, with Mother so sick an' nobody ever comin' to the house. Dad's too tired after working all day an' 'sides he wouldn't feel like going."

The barefacedness of the proposal came with a shock to Keith; but the wistful earnestness of the little face before him prevented him from giving vent to his indignation. What was the world coming to? he asked himself. Everyone seemed to be conspiring to throw him and this girl together. First of all, old Jim had virtually forced him to drive her from the station and now, here were Dick and Mrs. Bolton putting their heads together to make him take her to a dance. He had always refused to go to any of the village entertainments although he had often been asked; for the local belles and their mothers had marked him out as an eligible soon after his arrival in the district. Long ago, however, they had given him up in despair. To make his appearance now as Miss Coon's escort would be an ordeal from which a man of his modest disposition might well flinch.

Moreover, since the night when he had listened uninvited to her little concert by the creek bed, truth to tell she had been more in his thoughts than he felt was altogether healthy for one who had forsworn the sex. The haunting accents of her voice had lingered persistently in his memory and he found himself humming over snatches of her songs or recalling their cadences at all seasons of the day and

night. However his reason might disapprove, he could not disguise from himself the pleasure that he felt in the remembrance. These things passed rapidly through his mind as he paused before returning an answer. Whatever her present position might mean, Keith was well enough aware now that Miss Coon was no ordinary maid-of-all-work; but he felt that the realisation of this fact made it all the more necessary for him to keep aloof from her. To cover his embarrassment and give him the more time to reflect, having pushed back his plate, he drew a cigarette from his case and proceeded to light it.

"Did you bring your bow and arrows with you, Dicky?" he questioned at last, lifting his gaze from the cigarette to the boy's flushed face.

Dick looked up with bewilderment not unmixed with perturbation but was reassured by the twinkle in Keith's eye.

"Bow and arrows!" he repeated; "I have n't got any bow and arrows. I just wish I had. Why?"

"Oh, just a thought I had. I half expected to see you hadn't any clothes on and were sporting wings and a bow and arrows."

Dick was speechless with mystification.

"It was very good of your mother to think of it for Miss Coon, I'm sure," Keith continued; "and, of course, I would be glad to help out although I am not sure that she would appreciate the attention. Are you sure that she would go if we were to ask her?"

"O yes, sure she would but, of course, we have n't said anything to her about it—that is about asking you to take her. Dad was going to have taken her and she did say as how she would like to go and see how they did things here; but now Dad has a chance to work out with the team, he can't go an' she said it wouldn't matter. Then

Mother thought of you an' she thought that mebbe you wouldn't mind."

"Dicky, my lad," said Keith solemnly but with a twinkle in his eye. "It savours to me very strongly of fate —predestination, some people call it."

"I dunno what that is," said Dick staring blankly.

"Just as well for you, my boy, perhaps, that you don't. It has bothered wiser heads than yours or mine. It is a puzzle handed down to us by our forefathers and we are no nearer solving it than they were. I suppose you've never seen a puppet-show?"

"No," Dick answered shaking his head half ashamed.

"Nor a Punch and Judy?"

"No."

"You poor benighted boy! Never mind, though," said Keith consolingly, "the future has all the more in store for you. A puppet show, Dick, is one in which the actors are little dolls whose actions are controlled by strings worked by some one hidden behind the scenes. They move their arms and legs just as he makes them by pulling the strings.

"According to the predestination teaching, Dicky, we are just like the puppets. We have no wills of our own but just have to move according as some hidden power behind us pulls the strings."

"'Tain't true though, is it?" the boy asked somewhat doubtfully.

"It's a hard question, Dicky. I've always been rather inclined to favour the free-will theory—it's the more soothing to one's self-respect at least; but this is one of the times that I might almost believe there was something in the other. I feel as if somebody was pulling the strings on me. Call it fate or predestination or what you will; but, it seems to me—" and he looked at Dick with a

glance of mock reproach—"I know one that has a finger in the pie."

Dick sat silent not knowing that the cap was meant for his wearing.

"I see that I am boring you though," Keith apologised. "I am afraid that you have n't yet reached the philosophic age and such problems do not interest you. Anyway, Dicky, you have the best of it; for philosophers may be wise but they aren't happy. They know too much."

Dick munched reflectively at his pie.

"I wish I knew ever so much," he said. "I wish I knew as much as you do."

"But to come back to the question at issue, Dick, what am I going to wear to-night to go with this fine young lady of yours? Do they wear 'glad rags,' to use the popular slang, in these village affairs or does one wear one's ordinary?"

"Oh, just wear your Sunday suit. That will be all right."

"Well, it's about time I was getting ready, for I'll have to drive round with the buggy and that will take half an hour or more. You had better slip away home across the creek and don't for your life tell where you have been or let Miss Coon know anything about it. And next time you go about on business of this kind, don't go in disguise but put your wings on and bring your bow and arrows."

And he hustled the bewildered Dicky out the door.

CHAPTER XIV

And you'll come—won't you come?—to our ball.
W. M. Praed.

The Boltons and Miss Coon were all sitting together in the front room which they used as an eating and living room when a knock came to the door and Dick opened it to admit Keith Leicester. He was wearing a suit of black clothes with a sack coat and he shook hands first with Mrs. Bolton, who, now on the road to recovery, had been brought in to sit for a while in a big chair in front of the fire, and then with Marjorie and the others. After enquiring all about the invalid and passing a few remarks with Bolton about the weather and the ploughing, he came to the business that had brought him.

"There is a concert and dance at the village to-night that I was going to go down to," he said addressing the girl; "and I thought that perhaps you would be kind enough to accompany me. It will be altogether different I'm sure from anything you've ever seen."

She was sitting in a low rocker darning what by the size of it appeared to be one of Dick's socks; and Keith was able to enjoy without rudeness the fine lines of her profile with its delicate colouring warmed by the glow of the firelight and set in the soft foil of her dark golden hair that curled about her temples. She seemed taken by surprise and did not know just what to say.

"It is very kind of you to think of me," she said grate-

fully, "but I'm afraid that I couldn't go. It is rather short notice isn't it? Besides I have my patient to attend to; and I wouldn't know what to wear;" and she looked over to Mrs. Bolton for support.

"Oh, but you must go," said Mrs. Bolton earnestly, "and it is so kind of Mr. Leicester to call for you. Tom will look after me splendidly. You know you were to have gone with him if it hadn't been for this job over at Murray's to plough. It'll be a fine change for you and it will be so much nicer going with Mr. Leicester's fast team."

"You don't need to stay for the dance unless you want to," said Keith; "and as to clothes, one could go in overalls or whatever may be the equivalent in feminine attire. This will be a real Wild West affair I can tell you; and you will have a chance to see us *en fête.* I assure you we are quite different from what we are when grubbing in the ground or chopping in the woods. Dicky could perhaps go along too if he likes to sit in the back of the buggy with his legs hanging out. They are not so long that it would hurt them for half an hour I suppose."

"Oh gee, but that would be fine," cried Dick gleefully. "Aw now, do say you'll go, Marjorie," he pleaded.

There was nothing for it but for her to submit, which she did with a good grace; though she would have refused had it been possible. At the same time she could not deny that the prospect of the outing itself was pleasing enough but she felt a little uncomfortable about going with Mr. Leicester. However, she appreciated his kindness in asking her.

"It was just touch and go, young man," he said to himself as she rose to put her things on; "and she wouldn't have gone certainly if you hadn't asked Dicky. A nice thing to take Cupid along for a chaperone!"

Ten minutes later they were speeding along the road.

There was a bright moon shining and, as the ground was hard, the going was good. The horses were fresh and Marjorie admired the capable way in which Keith handled the lines.

"Is there much musical talent around this district?" she said after a while when the team had steadied down somewhat.

"I'm sure I really don't know," said Keith, taken off his guard and forgetting that he had been posing as one who was intimately acquainted with the class of entertainment that they were going to. "That is to say," he amended hastily as he suddenly remembered, "it changes about a good deal, people coming and going you know. You heard the capabilities of the Brayton choir. There is a very enthusiastic choir down at the church here in Portlake—it takes itself very seriously; and what it lacks in harmony it makes up in volume. I do not imagine, however, that we shall have a very high order of musical treat to-night. I wish you were going to sing some grand opera."

"How do you know I sing grand opera?" she asked with just a suspicion of tension in her voice. She was thinking of the night when she had danced by the creek and wondering if he had been there.

"Oh, Dicky has told me of the wonderful trills you can negotiate. Trills, I imagine, were a complete novelty to him before you came along," Keith replied. He was aware he was skating upon thin ice but the darkness favoured him.

"I'm afraid Dicky is a great chatterbox. I shall have to provide him with a gag."

"Oh don't do that I pray. One should never gag one's devoted admirers; better to furnish them with trumpets."

"Are you taking part yourself?" she asked changing from the defence to the attack with disconcerting sudden-

ness. "I haven't heard whether you sing or not although I know all about your prowess as a hunter and an oarsman."

"Ah now, that is too bad," Keith parried. "How one's indiscretions rise up to shame one. The young rascal is a double traitor and sells his news in both camps. No, I'm not going to take part. I am fond of singing really, though I haven't had any opportunity for it since I came out here."

"I suppose there are not many of the first-class artists come out here to the West, are there?"

"Yes, indeed; we have had Paderewski and Mischa Elman, the violinist, in Vancouver, and Melba and Calvé among the singers. Clara Butt was here not long ago. I went down to hear her and it was certainly a great treat. Then there was Bessie Abbott in De Koven's opera of 'Robin Hood;' that was worth while. The company supporting her was very good. Oh, nearly all the stars get out here in time although since I came I have only managed to get down to hear two or three."

"What about Grand Opera?"

"We don't get much of that, I'm afraid. Vancouver is too far away from every place to make it pay to bring good grand opera here—and too small a town. As yet the music-loving public is small—that is, high-class music, of course, I am referring to, but it is steadily growing. Good artists can always depend on a good house."

On this common ground of music they found ample food for conversation and each discovered that the other was well up on the subject. Both were familiar with the leading stars of the Grand Opera stage; Marjorie was so interested in the talk that she found they were at the hall before she realised it.

It was a rough, wooden barn of a place and there were several people standing by the door. Keith drove the team

around to a large shed at the rear where he tied them up. The hall was more than half filled when they entered and Marjorie felt that many curious eyes were on her as they walked up the aisle and took a seat well to the front.

The place was decorated with branches of the salmonberry covered with its pink blossoms and other greens, and the effect of these set off with streamers of red, white and blue bunting against the dark wooden walls of the building was pleasing and effective. There was a raised platform at the end which was fenced by a row of potted plants; and the chairman had already taken his seat at the small table in the centre of it, which was draped with a large Union Jack. Down below in front of him an orchestra of five pieces was already tuning up.

"That is Mr. Arbuthnot in the chair," whispered Keith. "He has one of the finest places in the municipality. You will meet his wife later. She is, I believe, the local arbiter and society queen."

"Is the orchestra local too?" asked Marjorie, "or is it imported for the occasion?"

"Oh, I rather fancy it is imported from Westminster—I suppose that I should say New Westminster," corrected Keith, "to one so lately from London. But the performance is about to begin."

The hall was now full and the Chairman rose and after a short speech called upon the orchestra to perform. The selection was "The Barcarolle" from "Tales of Hoffman;" and it was played with considerable taste and expression. Then followed a tenor solo by Mr. Snooks, a very tall gentleman with a melancholy cast of countenance. His song was "Come Into the Garden, Maud," which he rendered with a voice and expression in keeping with his appearance, the higher the notes the more thin and quavery his tones and the more strained and unhappy the contor-

tions of his features. However, the audience appeared to enjoy it and rapturously encored the number.

"If that is the way Tennyson sang it to her," whispered Marjorie as Mr. Snooks was looking out his music for the encore, "I'm sure Maud never came out into the garden."

"No, she certainly couldn't have found it very inviting to listen to that. You know the way Leigh makes her answer him," and he quoted *sotto voce:*

"You had better at once hurry home, dear, to bed,
It is getting so dreadfully late.
You may catch the bronchitis or cold in the head
If you linger so long at the gate!"

Mr. Snooks now sang "Asthore" with an intensification of sadness that made his previous song by comparison seem like a roundelay, and the audience this time appeared to find the song depressing for there was but a faint applause at the end. The next item, a humorous recitation by a girl of about fifteen, was heartily welcomed as a sort of antidote. Then the orchestra played again and was followed by Miss Arbuthnot, the chairman's daughter, a young lady in pink who sang "The Arrow and the Song," and an encore.

Then came an imitation of a Chinese laundryman given by the blacksmith in which the Chinaman is interviewed by a customer who calls to take home his laundry. This was very amusing to Marjorie who had never seen much of Chinamen and she laughed very heartily over it. Another two songs and an orchestral selection closed the programme and the chairman announced that the floor would be cleared for dancing. In a moment, the audience was on its feet and the whole place was in confusion as a number of the younger men cleared away the chairs from the floor, lined

them around the wall or carried them out. Keith seized the opportunity to introduce Marjorie to the chairman's wife and daughter who had been sitting near them.

"This is Mrs. Arbuthnot, Miss Coon, and Miss Arbuthnot," he said. "Miss Coon is staying with Mrs. Bolton."

"Yes," said the elderly lady bowing rather coldly; "I had heard that Mrs. Bolton had some one helping her."

Miss Arbuthnot did not look any more kindly at Marjorie than her mother had done; indeed her glance was expressive of anything but goodwill.

"We may feel greatly honoured to-night, I am sure," she said to Keith. "This is the first time you have ever been to one of our little affairs, is it not?"

Keith coloured but he countered bravely.

"The fame of them has become so insistent that one could not stay away any longer," he said. "Besides were not you going to sing?"

"Ah, I'm afraid there were other attractions," and she smiled somewhat disagreeably at Marjorie.

"I see that the dancing is going to begin," said Keith, not relishing the turn that the conversation was taking. "I wonder if you would be good enough to show Miss Coon the dressing room. Do not be long, please," he added turning to the latter, "as I would like to have this dance."

Miss Arbuthnot assented with none too good a grace and the two girls walked off together to the dressing-room which was at one corner of the hall. Mrs. Arbuthnot then turned away, evidently not too pleased at having been introduced to the Bolton hired girl; and Keith sat down and waited till Marjorie appeared. She was not long, but she came back alone.

"I fear that I am *persona non grata* in Portlake society," she said with a little smile, half of amusement and half of annoyance. "Your social arbiter has frowned upon me;

I suppose my position with Mrs. Bolton puts me outside the pale."

"Too bad, the old cat!" he sympathised; "but you shall succeed in spite of her. I want the first dance myself and after that I shall devote my attention to making you popular. Unfortunately I'm afraid that I'm rather an outsider myself."

The floor had now been cleared and there were already about twenty couples up; and the orchestra began to play a waltz. The ladies were dressed some very simply and others with considerable pretension to style; and the garments of the men ranged from rough tweed and serge to evening dress. Everywhere there was a free-and-easy air, and every one seemed to be hail-fellow-well-met with each other. Many nodded or bowed to Keith and glanced with some curiosity and often a knowing little smile at his partner.

They stood watching the dancers for a minute or two. Some couples worked their hands up and down in pump-handle fashion, others waltzed around in a regular bear-hug or swayed back and forward like ships in a heavy sea, and there was great variety of styles. Marjorie's face was a study of wonder and amusement.

"How they do enjoy themselves," she said. "How fine it must be to be lighthearted like that," and she sighed. "But you want to be dancing too;" and she put her hand on his shoulder and they glided off.

She waltzed lightly and well and Keith who had not danced for years found he was enjoying himself immensely. She was wearing a simple white silk gown cut open at the throat; and Keith though outwardly calm and composed felt his heart beating rather wildly as he looked at her.

"Dick, my boy," he was thinking to himself, "you have

let me in for it right enough, you mischievous little cupid. And nothing more than a servant girl as far as appearances go, except for certain signs of breeding that she shows! It seems to me that it is a tragic business."

While his thoughts were busy thus he managed to murmur some kind of answer to the girl's remarks; but, fortunately, she too, was deep in her thoughts and did not say much. When the dance was ended, he introduced her to some of the young fellows. They would have been glad to take her for a partner but she said she would rather not dance any more. However, not to appear singular, she consented to dance with two of them, one for a two-step and the other for the Lancers, so Keith was left to his own resources. He did not want to dance with any one else; but an energetic master of ceremonies routed him out and made him do his duty by one of the wall flowers that had been left unappropriated. However, at the finish of the Lancers, he took her away from the perspiring young lumberman who had just been her partner and suggested that they have some refreshments. First of all, though, they hunted up Dicky whom they found engaged in a game of rough-and-tumble in the vestibule with four other boys, evidently choice spirits to judge by the manner in which legs and arms and bodies generally were mixed up in a wriggling mass on the floor. However, by taking hold of a leg that appeared to belong to Dicky, Keith was able by one or two vigorous pulls to disentangle it; and the boy was placed upright appearing very red in the face, hair dishevelled, and with clothes covered with dust but otherwise none the worse.

"We been havin' a game," he gasped somewhat apologetically as he saw who it was. "Were you lookin' for me?"

"We're going to see if we can get some ice-cream and we

wanted you to join us. Maybe your friends would like a little too as you all seem to be rather warm after your exercise."

"Perhaps if you stepped outside the door and dusted each other off though it would be better," added Marjorie smilingly, "or they may put us all out for tramps."

Grinning shyly and much pleased at the prospect, the boys did as they were bid; and then the whole party entered the hall again and took possession of one of the refreshment tables.

The ice-cream and cake was ten cents a helping and Dick was in high spirits, being proud of the glory reflected upon him by Keith's generosity to his chums. These were too shy to say much but they did ample justice to the ice-cream; and their satisfaction was doubled when their host called for an extra portion all round. Such lavishness had never been known in their experience. Marjorie, too, had surrendered herself to the enjoyment of the occasion and increased the merriment by making foolscaps for all of them out of the paper napkins.

"The happiness of children is so cheaply purchased," said Keith; "and it is so pure and unalloyed that I'm surprised often that older people are so indifferent about securing it when there is a chance."

"You have certainly made five of them very happy to-night," said Marjorie smiling. "I daresay they think you are a kind of god."

"When one is happy oneself, one is more apt to wish others to be so; and to play the bountiful is one of the choicest forms of self-indulgence," Keith answered with a modest air of deprecation.

"It was very kind of you to bring me here to-night I'm sure. I really have enjoyed myself," she said gratefully.

"I told him that you would like——" began Dick ex-

ultantly; but stopped short conscience-stricken as he remembered that he had promised to keep secret the fact that he had asked Mr. Leicester to take her to the dance. His little face grew scarlet; and he glanced up at the latter with such a face of conscious guilt that Marjorie could not help noticing that something was wrong.

"What did you say, Dicky?" she asked.

"I told Mr. Leicester that——" Dicky floundered miserably, "that you—that Mother would like you to go."

"Oh! so you went over to ask him to bring me?" and again Miss Coon's voice took on a tone of displeasure that Dick had heard once or twice before. "And what did Mr. Leicester say to that?"

Dick glanced up miserably to Keith for guidance, but there was no help there. He was gazing sternly in front of him; and would not look at Dicky at all. The atmosphere was tense; only the four other boys ate calmly at their ice-cream all unconscious of anything untoward in the situation. Instants of agony passed for Dicky and still Marjorie waited expectant and Mr. Leicester would not look at him.

"He said I should have wings and a bow and arrows," he said at last in desperation, this being the only thing outstanding that he could remember in his distress. "I didn't know what he meant."

On Keith's face the ghost of a smile flickered for a moment but it was a smile of tragedy. It was followed by a wave of crimson that swept in a flood over cheek and brow and ear.

"The fat is in the fire now!" he said to himself.

Marjorie flushed and then went pale. She turned and looked straight at Keith and his confusion was witness to the truth. She smiled a rather bitter, little smile.

"If I had known that you were bringing me because

Mrs. Bolton and Dicky asked you to, of course, I should not have allowed you to trouble yourself," she said. "I should like to go home now if you please," and she rose abruptly. "If you will get the horses I shall put my things on and be at the door ready;" and she moved towards the dressing room.

Here she found Miss Arbuthnot who was readjusting her flowers before the glass.

"Are you going home already?" she said as Marjorie began to put on her things. "I thought you seemed to be having a good time the way you were dancing."

"Yes, you see we have a long way to go and I have to be up early."

"I guess it ain't any fun to dance all night an' then get up at half past five or so in the morning. I'm glad I don't have to do it. Say, that Mr. Leicester is some dancer, ain't he? Funny he don't seem to go with the girls in his own rank. He likes to have a good time with working girls like you an' it doesn't lead to anythin', of course. It's kin' o' hard on the girls though. Oh, she's gone, is she?" she concluded in some disappointment as Marjorie, not waiting to say good-night, hurried from the room.

On the drive home, little was said; and what conversation there was, was forced and disjointed. Dicky tried hard to thaw the ice between his two elders but without success. Marjorie felt hurt and humiliated; Keith sympathised with her feelings but he felt it was not his fault.

"If it hadn't been that remark about the wings and the bow and arrows, she might have forgiven it," he thought; "but she's as proud as Lucifer and I'm afraid it's all up. Everything was going so nicely too," and he began to whistle from sheer vexation. As luck would

have it, the tune that came first to his lips was the one that had haunted him for the last week: "I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls." He had just whistled the first few bars when he stopped abruptly.

"I've put my foot in it again," he thought.

"Why that's the song that Marjorie sings," said Dicky who had been invited to sit in the middle on the seat instead of behind with his legs dangling out as on the drive in.

"Did you hear it the other night? We saw Cæsar and I thought you must have been there. Why didn't you let us know?"

Keith gave the horses a cut with the whip startling them into a quick trot and he found it hard work to hold them.

"Oh Dicky, Dicky, you're a regular *enfant terrible.* I should like to smother you," he was thinking.

Marjorie kept silence; but her farewell when they arrived at Bolton's was of the iciest as she alighted from the buggy and turned in to the cottage where the master of the house stood with the door open awaiting them.

CHAPTER XV

"The dream's here still: even when I wake it is
Without me as within me: not imagined, felt."

SHAKESPEARE.

With that he heard his dear master,
As he in his garden sate;
Says, Ever alacke, my little page,
What causes thee to weepe?

OLD BALLAD.

On the morning after the concert, Dick arose early and as soon as he had finished his chores and without waiting for any breakfast, he set off down to the creek to be alone with his misery. For Dick was very wretched indeed. After he had gone to bed he had tossed and turned for hours, it had seemed, before he could get to sleep; and when he did, he had been haunted by the most frightful dreams in all of which he was oppressed with the consciousness of guilt and the imminence of disgrace. In the one from which he had finally awakened in a sweat of horror, he had fancied himself at school and Forrest Eaton, a big overgrown lad of sixteen who was the bully of the district although the dunce of his class, had accused him to the teacher of having wings on his shoulders. It seemed that his teacher, Miss Williams, looked at him in surprise and asked if this was so; and all the boys and girls turned to stare at him with suspicion and aversion in their gaze. He rose to his feet and tried to utter a denial but the words would not come; and

at the same time, he was conscious of a peculiar heaviness about his shoulders that he had never felt before. Miss Williams came walking down the aisle towards him and, as she approached, by some strange transformation her features seemed to melt into those of Marjorie. Putting her hand to his shoulder, she caught hold of something white and glistening that seemed to be hanging there and pulled it gently towards her. "Oh, Dicky!" was all she said in the most sad and reproachful tone. Her eyes were wet with unshed tears and her whole face was so mournful that he felt he must have sinned without hope of pardon; but, at this point he awoke, and was most relieved to find that it was only a dream.

His relief, however, was but short-lived; for when he remembered how he had betrayed Mr. Leicester's confidence to Marjorie and how the two had parted in evident constraint and unfriendliness, he felt that the real trouble was just about as bad as the one he had dreamt of. After what had happened he felt that he could not face Marjorie at the breakfast table, hence his retreat to the friendly solitude of the canyon. Here, he idled away the time as best he might but with ever the same heaviness at heart, ever the same haunting sense of the enormity of his offense against his two best friends. For a while he threw stones into the creek, skilfully making them skip many times on the surface of the water; then he discovered a frog to which without any consciousness of cruelty, he afforded an uncomfortable quarter of an hour; then he busied himself for another space in trying to catch a chipmunk of a sociable disposition but still wary enough to avoid capture; but it was all a hollow mockery.

At last, he decided that he would go over to Mr. Leicester and see whether there was any chance of forgiveness there. Perhaps he had not taken the affair as hardly

as Dick supposed and, in any case, it would be something gained to know the worst. However, just as he had made up his mind, he saw Forrest Eaton, the bugbear of his life at school and the accusing figure of his dream, sauntering along to meet him.

"What you doin' out here, Skinny? You're lookin' kind o' down in the mouth, ain't you?" said the latter, coming to a stand, with an unpleasant grin upon his pimply face. "Your dad's been givin' you a lickin', I guess, eh?"

"It's none o' your business if he had, is it?" answered Dick defiantly.

"Oh, it ain't, ain't it, smarty," said the tormentor promptly knocking off Dick's cap with a sidesweep of his arm and grinning down upon him with the same malicious leer.

The smaller boy cast prudence to the winds. The horror of his dream came back to him and Forrest's part in it. This, joined to the memory of all the petty persecutions he had suffered in the past, filled him with a sudden passion of rage; and he rushed like a little fury, with both fists levelled, at his enemy. He got home with both of them, too; but only on the body, as Forrest stood above him on the side-hill and he was unable to reach to his face. The big boy fell, however, but in the impetuosity of his rush, Dick fell too; and as he was lower down, his enemy quickly recovering from his astonishment, managed to roll over on top of him. There was a brief struggle and Dick fought like a wildcat; but the odds of weight and strength against him were too great. Soon, the big boy had him flat on his back and was sitting on his chest with his knees pinning his victim's arms helpless to the ground, his ugly face flushed with victory gloating down upon Dick's which was eloquent of defiance.

"So, ye thought ye would, did you, eh?" said the boy on

top still breathing heavily. "'Tain't no business of mine, ain't it? Oh no, I suppose not;" and he emphasised each remark with one or two vicious slaps on the smaller boy's face. "Maybe ye'll tell me now what I asked you, will you?"

Dick set his teeth tight and answered not a word. He felt he would rather die than speak and he lay still looking up helplessly at his enemy. The latter tried hard to shake his resolution but without avail. Neither threats nor taunts nor the sharp stinging pain nor the tumultuous beating of his pulses would move him.

"All right then," said the big boy out of patience; "if your dad didn't give you a licking, I will. I'll teach you not to get gay with me again;" and he began to pommel his victim unmercifully. Dicky endured manfully—the despair of the morning had lent him fortitude—but he could not have stood the punishment much longer. However, an interruption occurred which saved him from fainting under it or from the shame of surrender. Cæsar had come bounding down the bank and stood a few paces off astonished at the curious sight before him. One ear was cocked forward and one was back, betraying his bewilderment as of one who should say, "Whatever in the world have we here?"

Dick, hearing the sound of his descent and looking round for a possible ally, soon caught a glimpse of him and called out to him. The dog came over and licked his face, looking enquiringly at Forrest who had desisted for a moment from tormenting his victim. Then he growled at the former, showing a gleaming set of ivories well sharpened for service. Forrest began to feel nervous. Dick broke silence at last, his shrill treble trembling with passion.

"If you don't get off I'll sick him on you," he cried.

The threat was at once effective for Forrest quickly rose to his feet and slunk off down the trail glancing nervously behind him as though uncertain as to whether Dick might not even yet carry out his threat. The latter pale but still defiant, rising stiffly and putting his arm around the dog, contented himself with shouting all the abusive and contemptuous names that his vocabulary could furnish after the retreating foe. When he was no longer in sight, however, his pose relaxed, the animation seemed to fade from the pale face and he turned a very sore and downcast little figure, to climb the path that led to Mr. Leicester's orchard. The beating he had received, severe as it had been, had not availed to drive away the trouble he had awakened to and he was still bent on finding out the worst from Mr. Leicester.

As it happened, the latter was out in the orchard going around his four-year-old apple trees. Some of them were covered with caterpillars which were devouring the tender young leaves and it was his task to strip these off into a basket, later to be burned in the kitchen stove.

It was not a pleasant sight to see the havoc that had already been wrought by the slimy creatures and did not tend to gladden Keith's otherwise unenviable frame of mind.

"Nature certainly symbolises truly the state of man," he philosophised. "Here were these thriving young trees just doing splendidly and, in a night almost, they are covered with a horde of wretched slugs and all their promise blighted. Last night I was as happy as a king—thought I had found my affinity—and then that wretched Dicky upsets the whole apple-cart. Old Shakespeare hit it right as he always did: What *is* it?

> *"To-day he puts forth*
> *The tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms . . .*
> *The third day comes a frost."*

I'm afraid in my case the frost came before I had a chance to blossom, or rather the caterpillars took my tender leaves. The old bard must have come through the mill himself; at least, he seems to have sized up life's little ironies correctly. Oh, well, he came through safely enough and I daresay so shall we."

As he was musing thus, he was suddenly aware of a small figure that stood beside him, a figure that was eloquent in every line of misery and contrition. Keith, however, was too intent on his work to take much notice.

"Hello, Dicky," he said; "how goes it this morning?"

"I've come over to say—to say I'm sorry," was the husky reply.

"Eh, what's that you're saying?" asked Keith, still proceeding with his work.

Dicky swallowed hard finding it difficult to go on.

"You know, last night," he stammered, "I told Marjorie after I had promised not to."

"Yes, it's true; you made rather a mess of it," said Keith still snipping away at the caterpillars; "but I don't think there is any need for an apology, is there?" and he turned to the boy with a smile, noting for the first time his appearance of utter dejection. "You haven't been doing anything awful, have you?"

Dicky was tracing imaginary figures on the ground with his foot and his hazel eyes were turned down. He was still trying to swallow the lump in his throat and finding it impossible.

"You said that—that," he stammered, "if I told her anything about me havin' told you to ask her to the dance I'd catch it from you; an' I sure promised not to an' then —an' then, I forgot all about it till it was out and she made me tell her the rest 'n she wouldn't speak to you after it"—Dicky had found his tongue at last and the

words came like a flood—"an' I wanted her to like you."

"Yes, I know, Dicky, and so did I; and I'm rather afraid now she hates me for she's a very proud little lady. It would make all the difference to her, you see, whether I asked her because I wanted to myself or because you and your mother asked me to. That is why I particularly told you to keep your mouth shut. Still I know very well you didn't mean to betray me—it just slipped out before you knew it—and I don't bear any ill-feeling about it."

Still Dicky was not satisfied.

"Marjorie won't like me any more and you won't either," he persisted; but his voice had a faint intonation of hope as of one who foretells the worst but would like to be contradicted.

"But I don't hold it up against you, Dick, and I am sure Marjorie wouldn't either," said Keith, trying to bring a smile to the woebegone face. " 'The tongue is an unruly member,' and you are finding the truth of it early, that's all. Cheer up and don't you worry over it any more."

The few words of kindness where he had expected blame and the revulsion of feeling they caused, accomplished what all Forrest Eaton's pommelling had failed to do and the tears started to the boy's eyes. It had been a trying morning and he was faint with hunger and the pain of his recent ill-treatment.

"I'm going home now," he said huskily, and his lip quivered as he turned away.

Keith glancing sideways caught a glimpse of the suffering little face and marked the boy's dejected mien and the stiffness of his walk. He laid down his basket and sprang after him.

"Why, what's the matter, Dicky, you're walking quite lame?" he asked, putting his arm on the boy's shoulder to comfort him. "Have you hurt yourself?"

"I—I've had a sort of—a sort of an accident," faltered Dick trying hard to force down the sobs that would come. "I didn't mean to cry," he said in excuse. "I haven't had any breakfast yet an' I guess I'm hungry."

"You haven't had breakfast yet! Why, you poor boy! What's the reason of that?"

"I came away before they were up 'cos I didn't like to meet Marjorie after last night; an' for a long time—I was afraid to come and meet you. You don't think she'll leave Mother, do you, for this?"

"Nc danger of that, Dick, so cheer up. It'll be all right in a day or two. I'll soon make it up with her as well, you'll see before very long; and we'll all be good friends again. You may be worthy of your bow and arrows yet; though to mention them, Dicky, was the worst break you made of all. There are double meanings we grown folk sometimes have when we speak that are beyond the understanding of small boys. The bow and arrows was one of them; but I think you had better not try to find out about it, in case of further disaster. And, on the whole, it would be as well if you shouldn't talk to Marjorie at all about me in the meantime.

"I think we shall go over to the house now," he said picking up his basket; "and you'll get your face washed—for it certainly needs it—and Mrs. Dalrymple will give you some breakfast."

Under the cheering effect of a cup of hot coffee and a plate of fried bacon, Dick's tongue was soon loosened and the full story of the morning's misadventure came out. By way of consolation, Keith promised to give him some box-

ing lessons so that he might be able to triumph over his enemy in the future; and Dick went home greatly comforted although somewhat uneasy as to the explanations that might be required at home for his disappearance.

CHAPTER XVI

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues.
SHAKESPEARE.

MARJORIE'S feelings on the morning after the dance were not so bitter as they were after the drive home the night before. She still smarted under the sense of humiliation in the thought that Keith had taken her to the dance, not because he wanted to but because of Mrs. Bolton and Dick's asking and perhaps from a feeling of pity for her loneliness. There seemed to be two voices within her, one of conscience censorious and domineering and another on the defensive, that seemed to represent her other self less virtuous, perhaps, but more human; and the two were carrying on a warm dispute over what had taken place the night before.

"It really wasn't fair to blame him for it, at any rate, and he had a right to think that I was rude and ungrateful," Conscience argued. "Mrs. Bolton was to blame if any one was, and she did it for the best, no doubt; but Mr. Leicester deserved to be thanked instead of to be snubbed as you snubbed him."

"It was a piece of presumption in him to take me at all under the circumstances," her Other Self argued.

"At the very least, you owe him an apology," said Conscience. "No one could have been more gentlemanly and considerate."

"No doubt, he had his own purposes to serve," was the

reply. "You remember what Miss Arbuthnot said about him."

"Yes, but any one could see with half an eye that she was jealous; and she did not appear as one whose word could be relied upon," Conscience objected, not without reason.

"I believe he was hiding behind the tree when I was singing for Dicky that night down by the creek. The dog was there and he doesn't go anywhere off the ranch without his master, Dicky says. And he started to whistle 'I dreamt that I dwelt.' A gentleman would have gone right away or would have come forward like a man and shown himself."

"Oh, well, men are but human after all; and if people will dance out in the open, they need not be annoyed if somebody comes along and sees them," Conscience replied to this with some heat. "There was nothing very wrong in looking at a girl dancing; and as for coming forward, it would have been as awkward for you as for him."

"Anyway I am done with him. I am not going to be patronised by any man. First, he takes me for a servant girl and now, although he evidently sees his mistake, he continues to treat me as one," said her Other Self, fanning her indignation.

"You've acted like a petulant child. Even Dicky was ashamed of you last night; and you're ashamed of yourself now though you won't admit it. If you don't apologise, you'll never forgive yourself," continued Conscience, nagging away with its customary persistence.

And it kept nagging all the morning while she cooked the breakfast and carried Mrs. Bolton's to her in bed, until she was heartily sick of the whole question. She was rather surprised that Dicky had not appeared for his breakfast although she was relieved to be spared his com-

pany for she felt somewhat guilty with regard to her treatment of him last night. Bolton himself did not notice the boy's absence but quickly swallowed what was put before him and hurried off to get his team for the day's work; so she was soon left to her own thoughts.

By the time she had washed up the dishes, Mrs. Bolton had arisen; and was much distressed when she found that Dicky had not come in to his breakfast and had not even been seen by any one that morning. When two hours had passed away and there was still no sign of him, she became genuinely alarmed. Nothing would do but Marjorie should go over to Mr. Leicester's and find out if he was there.

As a matter of fact, Marjorie was particularly averse to going anywhere near Mr. Leicester; but she had not the heart to refuse, so she set off without delay.

As she walked along the trail under the trees, her senses were keenly aware of the delicious freshness of the air, a freshness, however, that was redolent of that essence of woodland perfumes subtly compounded which blends the pungency of the pine with the delicacy of the wood-violet and a hundred other odours which it is impossible to analyse. The creek, too, was sparkling and foaming in the sunshine and the splash of the falls filled the whole canyon, with its soft and never-ceasing monody. As she came to the log across, a chipmunk sat on the end of it and gazed inquisitively at her for a few moments with its sharp little eyes as if to enquire her business and to dispute her right to passage of the stream, before it darted down the side and disappeared in the underbrush. It was an ideal day, she said to herself, and yet Conscience would persist in spoiling it all.

"Now is your chance," it urged, "to apologise. You couldn't have a better opportunity."

"Couldn't think of it," was the reply. "If there's any apology required, it is due from him," and so, the two went at it.

By the time that she had crossed over and climbed half-way up the high bank, on the other side, however, pride had capitulated; and she had firmly resolved that there would be an apology and that it would come from her. Perhaps it was the softening influence of Dame Nature that helped to turn the scale.

Just when Conscience had thus triumphed, however, happening to glance around she was aware of a small figure on the trail below her. Thinking that it must be Dick, she turned back to meet it only to find to her disappointment that it was not Dick at all but Forrest Eaton, a neighbour's boy whom she had met at his father's once when she had gone to get a setting of eggs.

Forrest had returned to look for a knife that he thought he must have dropped in the recent struggle; and he flushed rather guiltily when Marjorie asked him if he had seen Dick. He was aware that if Dick told of the mauling he had given him and if complaint should be made to his own father, there might be trouble for him. Mr. Eaton was aware of his son's bullying propensities and had punished him before for a similar offence to this one. It was true enough that Dick had struck the first blow; but with the difference between them in age and size, Forrest knew that that would hardly be reckoned sufficient excuse for such a beating as he had given Dick. He was a boy to whom it was almost second nature to lie and on the impulse of the moment and thinking that it might stand him in good stead if Dick should tell on him, he did so now.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," he replied with hardly a moment's hesitation; "I seen 'im all right, not long ago over in Mr.

Leicester's orchard; an' Mr. Leicester was lickin' 'im for all he was worth. I guess he must have caught 'im up to somethin'."

"Oh, surely that couldn't be," said Marjorie incredulously. "Why, Dick and he are the best of friends."

"Mebbe so, ma'am, but I suppose he must have caught him at somethin' for he was sure givin' it to him good. Oh, Dicky ain't no such angel as you might think," he added winking portentously, having now quite recovered from his momentary confusion. "Don't say nothing to 'im about it though or to his folks, will you, else I shouldn't have told you? Dad allus says we mustn't tell tales out of school," he begged with a fine air of ingenuousness that quite imposed on Marjorie.

"Certainly not, not a word," she hastened to assure him; and without waiting further, he sauntered off up the creek.

Marjorie looked after him, hesitating whether or not to call him back to ask for more particulars; but she could not reconcile it with her sense of what was fitting. The matter was too intimate and painful.

What reason could Mr. Leicester possibly have for thrashing Dicky when the two were always the best of friends? Yet Forrest would hardly be likely to invent such a story. Then she thought of the night before when Dick's unwitting betrayal had spoilt the evening for all of them. Surely Mr. Leicester could never have the heart to punish the boy for that; and yet, what other reason could there possibly be? None but a cad could be so cruel.

"The coward!" she said to herself as conviction became more certain, "venting his spleen on poor Dicky! I wouldn't have thought it of him. Well, there's one thing sure; he doesn't deserve any apology from me;" and with a

feeling of relief to be spared the humiliation, she turned homeward, nursing her righteous indignation. She counted that she would be able to tell from Dick's manner when she saw him whether or not Forrest's story were true.

Half an hour later, Dick made his appearance as Marjorie sat on the back porch shelling peas. He walked a trifle stiffly, she thought, different from his usual jaunty stride; and he was plainly ill at ease as Marjorie called out to him.

"Why, Dicky, where have you been all morning? Your mother has been quite worried about you," she said reproachfully; but her voice was kindly too.

"Oh, I'm sorry," he said; "she might have known I was all right though. I've only been at Mr. Leicester's."

"What were you doing there so early?" asked Marjorie.

"Oh, nothin' much," said Dick blushing miserably; "I think I'll go in to see Mother."

His distress was so manifest that Marjorie had not the heart to question him further; and he passed into the house.

"I'm afraid it was true enough, and there could be no other reason," she said to herself; and while her pride took some satisfaction, she was surprised to find that her main feeling was one of sadness as for a friend who has been found wanting.

CHAPTER XVII

The ladie has left her father's ha'
And followed him over the sea:
O wae's me that I sent him awa'
For puirtith's sake! quo she.

OLD BALLAD.

PLOUGHING and planting had passed and spring had turned into summer. Keith had never worked harder or more faithfully than he had this season for he found in physical toil a certain amount of relief from the heart hunger that had afflicted him ever since the night of the dance which had ended so disastrously.

He had done all that he could to effect his reconciliation with Miss Coon but without success. When he called at the Boltons, which he had done several times on the most flimsy excuses, Miss Coon, if he saw her, was invariably civil but cold; and all his attempts to see her alone were futile. If he went in the day-time, she seemed to have something pressing to do in the kitchen while Mrs. Bolton was left to entertain him in the front parlour; and if he made his call in the evening, she retired to her room.

Dick was kept busy at school and most of his spare time was taken up with the chores and helping his father on the ranch, so that Keith did not see very much of him either. The boy viewed with sorrow the estrangement between his friends; but as he had promised Keith not to talk to Marjorie about him, he was unable to

remonstrate with the latter. She ascribed his silence to resentment for the punishment he had received; and feeling that the subject was probably a sore one, she had too much delicacy to broach it. She herself felt somewhat unhappy over the line she had followed with Mr. Leicester but she felt that it was the only possible one after his treatment of Dick. However, she, too, found distraction in hard work; for Mrs. Bolton was far from strong and it was necessary for the younger woman to take most of the work on her shoulders. This was no light matter for one who was not accustomed to it, especially as the household had to be run on the most economical lines; and her close attention to these duties was responsible for the fact that Keith had never managed to surprise her again in the woods alone.

One evening towards the end of May, he had come home from a hard day's work and sat down to dinner and the luxury of going through the week's mail which Alec had brought home from the village. The bag was bigger than ordinarily and he sorted its contents out with care. "Punch," the "Sketch" and the "Times" together with the "Vancouver Province" he laid aside for attention later; and the letters—there were several—he retained for immediate perusal. He glanced at the envelopes. One from his banker in Vancouver, another from the Department of Agriculture in Victoria, another from an implement house advising him of having mailed him their catalogue, a couple of bills and the last bore the device of the Château Frontenac, Quebec. It was the handwriting rather than the heading, however, that arrested his attention; and the lines of his face hardened as he picked it up quickly and broke the seal. The letter read as follows:

Dear Keith:

You will no doubt be surprised to hear from me and from your own side of the Atlantic, too, but the strangeness of this life of ours and the smallness of the world we live in are platitudes that we seem never to tire of.

When we parted three years ago after you had decided that we could not continue friends when we could not be something closer, I suppose you thought that I had passed out of your life forever. As you know, that was never my wish but, of course, I acquiesced in your decision, as indeed, I could not help myself; and I was not without the hope even then that the lapse of time would soften the feelings of bitterness that my action—although to my mind the best for both of us—was bound to bring about. The bitterness—I can assure you—was not all on your side and especially as the responsibility of the step and any blame that there might be attached to it lay upon my shoulders.

Whether you have forgiven me I do not know but I am hoping that you have; for I can never be indifferent to your esteem.

I have not been very strong this winter and spring and the Doctor has prescribed for me a trip abroad, the longer, he says, the better; and as some friends of mine were coming out to Vancouver, I have taken the opportunity to travel so far in their company after which I shall go on to Australia, where I have relatives.

I understand that you have a ranch—what associations of freedom and the wilds does the word not call up—not far from Vancouver; and I thought that perhaps, if time has taken away the sting and you can think of me now without any rancour, that you might be generous enough to prove it by coming to see me. I should like to hear about your life—so different from the old one—and to have a chat over old times. There, now, be a dear boy like you used to be and come to see me. You know as

we grow older and leave more of our life behind us, we are apt more to prize the remembrance of happier things.

But I must not grow sentimental and bore you although there was a time, you will remember, when we did not find such speculations a bore. No doubt, you will have changed considerably in your ideas after your experience of the West with its democratic and unconventional ways of thinking. You may be married though I suppose I should probably have heard of it in some way; for after all, we in the Old Country are still fairly well in touch with what goes on in the colonies; and British Columbia is one of the most favoured by us.

I am still leading the life of single blessedness as you see. When one has once set a standard, it is hard to come down from it and whatever the outward circumstances that came between us, you were always for me the ideal of the "very parfit knyghte" *sans peur et sans reproche.*

This is a long screed and though there is a lot of news that I could tell you about mutual friends, I shall not burden you with it now; as I hope to open my budget when I see you. I expect we shall be in Vancouver on Friday, the 29th—I cannot tell whether by the morning or the evening train as I have to be guided by my friends' wishes. We shall, of course, stay at the C. P. R. Hotel and I shall hope to see you there. Meantime *au revoir.*

Your friend,

PATRICIA DEVEREUX.

Keith laid down the letter and ate his soup mechanically. "Patricia coming to Vancouver and she wants to see me! Well, the news doesn't thrill me though once it might have done. One can learn a lot in three years, as she hints. I doubt, Patricia, the old feeling is all dead—you killed it—and it is no use trying to revive it. To meet again would only make us both uncomfortable and give us pain. I won't go."

He repeated this several times to himself in the course of the evening as he sat smoking his pipe in front of the fire; but for some reason he could not find satisfaction in the resolve.

"It looks like showing the white feather," he thought, "and besides it would not be very gallant to refuse. I believe I'll go after all. I need a change anyway."

And having told the Dalrymples that he was going to town in the morning, he went to bed and slept soundly.

CHAPTER XVIII

Telling tales of the fairy who travelled like steam,
In a pumpkin-shell coach, with two rats for her team!
WHITTIER.

"I THINK we'd better ask Mr. Leicester," Mrs. Bolton was saying as Marjorie entered the room, and took a seat in front of the fire. The former sat at the end of the table leaning her head upon her hands. Bolton lay on the lounge and Dick was lying on the hearth-rug looking into the blaze.

"I hate to do it but I guess it's about the only thing we can do," said Bolton.

There was silence. Marjorie felt that she had broken in on a private conference but it was too late to back out.

"Now just what is it?" she said. "You're all just as blue as you can be and I want to know why. If I'm not to be treated as one of the family I shall go right back to England. Isn't that right, Dicky? and then who would you have to play 'fairies' with you."

Dicky looked up with rather a woebegone face but did not speak.

"We didn't want to worry you, deary," said Mrs. Bolton. "It's bad enough to have you slaving all day without asking you to share our other troubles. You that shouldn't have to do a hand's turn, by rights."

"When I share the work I think I have the right to share the worries," said Marjorie. "It is far harder for

me to know that things are going wrong and not to know how or why."

"That's right, Mother," said Bolton; "you might as well tell her."

"Well, it's this way: You see Jim was expectin' to get the money from the mill people for this teaming he has been doing for them; and to pay the store bill with it. It seems though that the mill people, Main and Tracy, that is, are in a bad way an' they're not able to pay the men; an' Jim can't get a cent out of them for a whole month's work. Now Jamieson at the store says he can't give us any further credit. Then there's an interest payment due on the mortgage an' the man is writing us that, if it isn't paid, he will give it to his lawyers, so we don't know what to do. I was thinkin' maybe Mr. Leicester would help us out with a loan for a little."

"How much money would you need?" asked Marjorie.

"There was about ninety dollars coming from Main and Tracy and it would just take us about that to keep us going. Me bein' sick has put us behind so much," and Mrs. Bolton sighed heavily.

Marjorie was silent for a space. She was thinking deeply.

"I'll tell you what," she said; "I think if I went up to town I could get the money, but you mustn't ask me how. There is no need to borrow from Mr. Leicester. I shall be your banker."

Mrs. Bolton's face cleared but it clouded over again. Bolton sat up hastily on the lounge.

"I ain't goin' to have you humiliatin' yourself to borrow money for us," he said fiercely. "It's bad enough the way it is an' I'm deathly ashamed to think we haven't been able to do better for you. It's enough to make a man

take to drink. But you see how it is yourself. 'Tain't our fault."

"There's no question of me humiliating myself to get the money, Bolton," said Marjorie quietly. "I shall have no difficulty in getting it, I am confident; and I shall be only too glad to do it. And you needn't reproach yourself about what you have done for me, for you've done everything. You have given me a home when I needed one and made me as one of yourselves; and what more could you do than that. If trouble comes to you, I must be allowed to share it; or I shall think you consider me an outsider and I shall go away. You and dear old Nursie here have been kindness itself," and she went over and put her arms round Mrs. Bolton who was wiping off the tears from her eyes; "and as for Dicky, he's been just a dear.

"Now cheer up, everybody, and let's make our plans what we are going to do with all this money when we get it. What shall I bring you, Dicky, when I come back from town? Behold in me the fairy godmother;" and she picked up a newspaper that lay on the table, twisted it into a cornucopia and placed it on her head. "Now, sir, I shall give you three wishes. What are your desires?" and she stood smiling before the boy who had risen to his feet in his excitement, the gleam in his eyes belying the bashfulness of his pose as he struggled to realise whether the offer was in earnest or not.

Marjorie saw his hesitation.

"Come along now, Dicky; don't be afraid. Just pretend for a minute that I am a real, live, fairy godmother; and say just what you would like."

Dick's face cleared and he beamed all over, entering into the spirit of the game.

"Well, godmother, please, I should like a new dress for Mother, and a new pipe for Dad."

"Wait a bit though, my son. The wishes must be for yourself. It's only make-believe, you know; so don't be afraid to ask. Whatever lies dearest to your heart, even to the half of my kingdom."

"It's just a game, honest injun?" said Dicky.

"Cross my heart; hope to die," said Marjorie, cheerfully perjuring herself in a good cause.

"Well then, godmother, please, I should like a bay pony like Norman Allison's with a long tail," said Dicky abandoning himself to the luxury of the make-believe, now that he was persuaded that it was a game and nothing more.

"Wish number one," said the godmother with a nod of assent.

"And I should like a 'twenty-two' rifle with ammunition enough to do for a year."

"Wish number two," nodded the godmother. "Now, be careful, for this is the last one. Choose well, my son, while the choice is yours."

Dick pondered for a moment.

"I know," he cried, all aglow with excitement, "please, godmother, I would like a book all about Peter Pan and the fairies, the one you told me about, you know, with the beautiful pictures in it of the pirates and Wendy and the crocodile with the alarm clock in its stomach."

"My son, thou hast chosen wisely," said the fairy godmother with much solemnity, "in that thou hast not chosen only for the things of sense but hast had also regard for the things of the spirit. Thy desires shall be granted unto thee," and she doffed the cornucopia and was plain Marjorie once more.

"Now, Dicky, you must get to bed and be up early to drive me to the station," she said dropping the grand manner; "and I shall have to go and pack my bag for I may

not get back to-morrow night, although I expect to. The great world is full of adventures and when we go down into it, Dicky, we never know what is going to happen. I just wish I might have taken you with me but you must stay and help Mother and see that she doesn't hurt herself when I'm away."

"Gee! wouldn't that have been fine," said Dicky wistfully. "Some one has got to look after Mother though and I'll work hard when you're away," he added forcing a note of cheerfulness. "We'll count the hours till you get back. Won't we, Mother?"

CHAPTER XIX

"I thank you for your company; but, good faith,
I had as lief have been myself alone."

SHAKESPEARE.

THERE was a tear in Marjorie's eye next morning as she turned away from the car window through which she had been waving farewell to Dicky who had driven her down. She was feeling a shade lonesome at the thought of going into the strange city in which she knew absolutely no one; and the parting with the boy even for so short a visit affected her more than she would have believed possible.

"The brave little chap," she said to herself; "I am as fond of him as I can be. How he would like to come along but he doesn't say a word about it. I don't believe I could have stood the homesickness if it hadn't been for him and his loving little ways and his frank admiration. After all, if we only have some one that thoroughly believes in us, it makes all the difference in the struggle that each of us is waging in this crazy, topsy-turvy old world of ours."

Her thoughts went back to the evening of her arrival a few short weeks before. How forlorn she had felt in this vast lone land so wild and so thinly-peopled and so far away from all her friends, and a little doubtful as she was as to the reception she would meet with from the Boltons. Then her future had lain dark and mysterious before her. The whole tenor of her life, she had realised,

would be radically changed by the step that she had taken. She had felt awed and depressed by this element of mystery though it had held something of fascination for her too.

Now, in this short space of time, how her whole horizon had changed. The Boltons had made her as one of themselves; and for the first time in her life, perhaps, she had known what it was to have others depending upon her for help; had known the joy and satisfaction of loving service unselfishly rendered. In her sheltered existence in England, she had been waited on hand and foot, been fed on the choicest of fare, and, apart from the discipline of Aunt Sophronia, she had been shielded from all the harsher experiences of life, the disagreeables that fall to the lot of those whom she had been taught to call the lower classes. Now she found herself identified with the Boltons, involved with them in the struggle for the mere necessaries of life; tasting of its acrid pangs as well as of its humble pleasures. To-day she felt that she was going forth upon an adventure, an enterprise that was to bring relief and happiness to those with whom she had cast in her lot and her spirits rose in the anticipation.

She was interrupted in her reflections by some one who came up the aisle from behind and sat down beside her. There were not many in the train and she turned round with some annoyance to see who had been so bold as to seek a share of her seat when there were plenty of others vacant. The annoyance was not dissipated when she saw it was Mr. Leicester.

If there was coldness in her greeting, however, there was no lack of warmth in his.

"Good-morning, Miss Coon," he said smiling; "it was quite a pleasant surprise to see you get on at Portlake. I

got aboard at Brayton as it is a little nearer my place. Are you going to Vancouver?"

"Yes, I am going down on business," she said in as frigid a tone as she could assume.

"Oh, are you?" he went on with unabated geniality. "Well, I am supposed to be going down on pleasure though it is awkward leaving the work on the ranch just now. However, a friend of mine is passing through the city and has asked me to meet her; and I daresay that I shall enjoy a little change. The woods are apt to get on one's nerves if one gets too much of them, don't you think?"

"You must remember I have not had very long experience of them yet. There are worse things than solitude at times," she remarked significantly. She was holding her head averted so as to look out the window and Keith had a good view of her profile which was coldly severe.

"She scored a hit on you there, my boy," he said to himself, "and she doesn't thaw a bit."

"There is some beautiful scenery going down this Fraser River," he opened up again, thinking that here at least was a safe subject by which he might be able to charm away her unfriendly attitude.

"Yes, but don't you think," she replied, turning her head towards him for the first time, "that one enjoys scenery so much better when one does not have some one at one's elbow ready to say 'how nice' at everything worth seeing that comes along."

"That's certainly true," agreed Keith with enthusiasm refusing to see anything personal in the remark. "I remember the last time I came through the Rockies there were a mother and daughter in the observation car that kept us all in fidgets. At every turn in the scenery the one would say, 'Oh, Sophy, isn't that pretty'—'pretty,' mind you, referring to Mount Stephen or the Three Sisters

or some such magnificent sight that a person can only gaze at in awe; and the daughter would answer back, 'Yes, Ma, it's just too sweet for anything;' and so they kept at it all day long till we were heartily sick of them."

Marjorie smiled faintly at Keith's little story but he felt somehow that it had missed fire. She remained silent, still gazing out across the fields.

"And how is Dicky this morning?" Keith asked, thinking that he might be able to arouse some interest in this subject. "I saw he drove you down behind Kitchener. He's quite proud of Kitchener, isn't he?"

"Oh Dicky's all right," she replied.

"I haven't been seeing so much of him lately."

"No, it's not surprising though, is it?" she asked rather pointedly.

"I suppose he's kept pretty busy with school and one way and another," he pursued without noticing the sinister drift of her remark.

There was a pause again.

"I have been thinking for a long time, you know, Miss Coon, that I must have offended you in some way; and I've been cudgelling my brains to think what it could be that I had done," Keith began, at last, making the plunge boldly. "Ever since the night of the dance you have been anything but—what shall I say—anything but friendly in your manner towards me. There must be some reason for it all, and I think that I have a right to know what it is."

Marjorie kept on looking at the scenery. She was still feeling annoyed with him for forcing his company upon her. She felt that she was acting badly but her ill nature had the upper hand. Besides he had been mean to Dicky and deserved, therefore, no consideration.

"There is no reason, I'm sure, why you should concern yourself in the matter," she said after a moment.

Keith was both puzzled and mortified. He felt that he had done nothing to justify her evident dislike of him. It was not reasonable to suppose that her displeasure of the night at the dance would yet be strong enough to cause her to treat him so coldly. Perhaps it was the discovery of his having seen her dancing for Dicky down by the creek. Maid's moods are queer things to fathom, he reflected. In any case, he resolved, he must get to the bottom of the matter although it was an awkward subject to broach.

"I thought that perhaps it might be that I had watched you dancing and singing for Dicky down by the creek one night," he began blushing in some confusion; "but after all I didn't come that way on purpose and you were right on the trail. Human flesh and blood couldn't have resisted the temptation to look on for a few minutes. You did make such a lovely picture, you know, and the singing was splendid."

"It was my fault to take the risk of any one coming past and seeing me," she replied but without any graciousness in her tone. "I never thought of any one coming there. It is so quiet and secluded. I would rather not discuss this matter any further, Mr. Leicester; and I am not in a sociable mood to-day as you can see."

"I beg your pardon," he said, rising and lifting his hat, and his tones were as icy as hers. "I am very sorry to have intruded, but I shall see that it does not happen again"; and he stalked off to the smoking room to soothe his wounded feelings with a pipe.

Marjorie repented then, but it was too late. She had been rude and ill-bred and had put herself wholly in the wrong; and she could have cried with the vexation of it.

She had behaved, she told herself, with all the pettishness of a spoilt child. So it often happens. We work ourselves up into a righteous anger and as soon as we have vented it, the righteousness seems to have departed and we find ourselves in the wrong.

The sunshine and the freshness of the morning and the beautiful panorama passing the window was spoilt for her. The wide-spreading green expanse of the Pitt Meadows and the noble stream of the Pitt itself flowing through them and the chain of lofty, blue mountains behind dominated by the giant twin peaks of the Golden Ears; then, further on, the picturesque, gravelly bed of the Coquitlam and the quaint, scattered mushroom town beside it; then the South Arm of Burrard Inlet with its deeply-wooded shores and its busy lumber mills; then the Inlet itself widening out, with its gay pleasure-launches carrying happy picnic crowds, the limpid waters reflecting the green trees and the rocky ramparts that guard this Sunset Doorway of the Pacific, all these appealed to her sense of beauty and commanded her admiration but failed to give her enjoyment.

Soon they dashed through lumber yards and factories and docks, all those hives of industry that gather around the railway and the water-front of a big city; and she knew that she had reached Vancouver at last. It was good to see the life and activity again after the quietness of the woods; the drays and the street-cars, the tugs and the ferry-boats, and the people everywhere rushing to and fro.

The train, at last, drew in to the covered depot and taking her suitcase, she climbed the stairs with the crowd. Outside the station, she found amongst the row of buses that of the Hotel Vancouver, into which she quickly mounted and was borne away; but she saw no signs of her fellow-passenger, Mr. Leicester.

CHAPTER XX

Farewell, then, my golden repeater,
We're come to my Uncle's old shop.

T. Hood.

He mounted her on a bonnie bay horse.

Old Ballad.

The bus quickly arrived at the door of the hotel and Marjorie who was accustomed to the best in London was astonished by the imposing appearance of this one. Towering above the street to its fifteen stories or so, as she passed inside she had the hurried impression of a huge pile turreted like some ancient mediæval fortress but modern in its general design and more lofty. Its very size and grandeur made her feel all the more lonely and insignificant as she passed into the spacious foyer and asked at the desk for a room. When she had signed her name in the register it gave her something of a shock on glancing up the page to see that of Keith Leicester. She had not contemplated for a moment the possibility that he would be staying at the Vancouver. She had decided to come to it herself as she felt that she would be more protected and secure staying at a place the reputation of which was above question and she felt that this would be well worth paying for. Besides she could not afford to run any chances as to the safety of the jewels which she had brought with her on purpose to raise the money which she required.

Now when she saw Mr. Leicester's name, her first impulse was to go to another hotel; but as she had put her name down and the clerk had already assigned her a room, she felt constrained to let things go as they were. In a moment she was following the bell-boy who showed her to a room on the eighth floor, next to one of the turrets that made the building so picturesque and looking out to the front with a splendid view of the mountains and the inlet.

The boy having departed, she looked at her watch and found that it was only ten o'clock. The sooner she got her business done, she decided, the better, and then she would be free to enjoy herself.

When she had offered to raise the money for the Boltons she had not foreseen any difficulty. She had some valuable pieces of jewelry and she did not anticipate any trouble in selling them for at least two-thirds of their value; but now that the time had arrived for undertaking the business, she felt not a little trepidation. She had heard of pawnbrokers and even seen their shops in London but any actual business with them was altogether outside of her knowledge. It now occurred to her that they were likely enough to try to take advantage of her inexperience; and she felt that perhaps she had done wrong in not asking Bolton to accompany her. She was afraid, however, that if he knew how she was to get the money he would absolutely refuse to let her make the sacrifice.

At any rate, the thing had to be done, so she plucked up her courage and sallied out bravely. Downstairs in the foyer she consulted the classified lists in the telephone directory but, though there seemed to be everything else under the p's from paving contractor to pickle manufacturers, there was not a sign of a pawnbroker.

"Dear me!" she said to herself. "Is it possible that in

the West people are all so well off that the pawnbroker is unnecessary?"

She did not feel equal to making enquiries of the dignified hotel clerk, so she went out into the street, resolved to reconnoitre herself. Down Granville Street she went past the Hudsons Bay Stores which recalled to her mind tales of adventures of the fur traders read in her early girlhood. It gave her a thrill to notice on one of their delivery wagons passing by, the words "Established 1670" and she thought to herself that there were some things in Canada not so new after all.

Down Granville Street she went to the Post Office and then east along Hastings Street as far as the B. C. Electric Station, but although she saw almost all kinds of stores and many attractive windows, there was no sign of what she was in search of. There were barbers' poles and electric signs of every description, but the three golden balls were nowhere to be seen. At last, she decided that she must ask some one, and she picked out for the purpose a benevolent looking old gentleman with a white beard. For anything else she would have asked a policeman, but she felt instinctively that for this it was best not to consult one of the Force.

"Why, bless my soul, what did you say—a pawnbroker?" he sputtered in astonishment, evidently distrusting his ears.

Marjorie repeated her query to reassure him. He looked at her amazed.

"A pawnbroker, miss!" he repeated after her. "No, I'm afraid not; I never heard of one here. I suppose there are such places in the slums, but I am not acquainted with them."

Marjorie thanked him and walked on. This time she asked a youngish man; and while he too seemed somewhat

surprised at her request, he was able to give her the information.

"If you will walk down a block towards the waterfront," he said, "there are several down there. You're a stranger here, aren't you?"

She assented.

"Well, you keep right on and you'll come to them."

She thanked him and soon found herself in the street to which he had directed her. The shops here were of a poorer class, mostly cheap clothing places and there were a number of second-rate hotels. She found a place with all kinds of miscellaneous articles in the window, jewelry, watches, telescopes, guns, revolvers, and bowie knives, a regular curiosity shop it was, and in the windows there was the welcome sign, "Money to Loan."

She went in and an old man came forward. He was the typical Jew in feature, and he rubbed his hands as he approached.

"What can I do for you, miss?"

"I have some jewels I want to sell," she said timidly. "Diamonds mostly, they are. Do you think you would like to buy them?"

"I'm afraid, miss, I'm overstocked, and I have so many things offered me; but perhaps you would let me see them. I would know better then," and he grinned at her under his glasses.

She opened her little bag and took out a diamond ring in a case, a pearl necklace and a beautiful sunburst of diamonds and sapphires.

The old Jew's eyes gleamed when he saw the jewels and he took them up in his hands and examined them carefully, first with the naked eye and then with a glass. Then he grinned impudently into Marjorie's face, staring at her

for a while without saying a word. In spite of herself she grew embarrassed under his gaze.

"Well, what do you think of them?" she asked impatiently. "I do not know what they cost originally but I know that they are valuable."

"So you want to sell them, do you, eh, miss? Well, well, but you know you're a very young woman to be selling jewels like these here. You would have to say where you got them."

Unable to speak for anger, Marjorie silently snatched up her jewels and putting them back in the bag, she snapped it close and marched from the shop without another word. The old man tried to get her to come back, but she gave him no heed and walked down the street as fast as she could.

But she had not gone far before she came to another shop very similar to the first one; and as she was determined to finish her business she went in here. She liked the looks of the man in charge and she quickly made him acquainted with her business. He, too, examined the jewelry very carefully.

"Yes, they are very fine pieces," he said; "but if I bought them from you I should only be able to give you about half what they cost. If we are to tie the money up in stock like this we must be sure that when we sell we shall make a big profit."

"Well, how much would you give me for these—say for this diamond ring now?" Marjorie asked. She liked the man's way of talking.

"That is a very fine diamond and it is well set. Probably it cost over a hundred dollars retail; but all I would pay for it would be fifty. Then if I sold it at eighty or ninety, I would think that I was doing well but I might have to wait six months or a year to do that."

"And the necklace and the sunburst?"

"Oh, I might go as high as three hundred dollars for the necklace and perhaps two hundred for the sunburst. They are both fine pieces. I should say that they were not made on this side of the Atlantic."

"No, they were bought for me in London. I will sell you the necklace for three hundred dollars."

He looked at Marjorie a little doubtfully.

"Are you living in the city?"

"I live at Portlake not far from here; but I am staying at the Hotel Vancouver while I am in town."

"I suppose these are your own jewels?"

Marjorie laughed, somewhat piqued at the question.

"Otherwise I certainly shouldn't be selling them," she replied. "They were all gifts to me and I should not sell them except that I have pressing need of the money. You need not be afraid of their being stolen."

He appeared to be satisfied.

"Oh, no doubt, that is all right," he hastened to assure her; "but I should have to keep them for a couple of days, say, before I would pay the money. You see there are certain requirements of the law that have to be met with—we have to give the police, for instance, a description of all the articles we take. However, I suppose you could wait that long."

"I suppose so," said Marjorie a little doubtfully; for she was disappointed that the matter could not be concluded there and then. "It will delay my return home, that is all. However, of course, you have a right to take every precaution. I have some purchases to make, however; and if you could have made me an advance on the necklace it would have helped me considerably."

She still had about fifty dollars of her money left but she wanted to buy the presents for Dicky and the others.

It would help to pass the two days away if she could do this; and would save her spending a longer time in the city, if she had everything done by the time she got the money.

He hesitated for a moment or two.

"Well," he said at last;; "you look honest enough and I'm willing to take a chance on advancing you fifty dollars."

So the bargain was concluded and she left him the necklace and signed a receipt for the money. Then, well pleased with the result, she walked back to the hotel for lunch.

In the afternoon Marjorie went shopping. First, she bought a dress for Mrs. Bolton at the Hudsons Bay Stores, then a meerschaum pipe for Bolton himself which the tobacconist assured her was one of the best in the store. Then she sought a bookstore and purchased a copy of Barrie's "Peter Pan" with illustrations by Arthur Rackham. At a gunsmith's it did not take long to choose a "twenty-two" rifle and to stipulate for the ammunition "to last for a year." The salesman seemed anxious to please and she enlisted his help in the matter of the "bay pony with the long tail," in which he seemed to be very much interested.

"I tell you what to do," he advised. "Take the car down to the Horse Show Building at the entrance to Stanley Park. They keep a regular boarding stable there and saddle horses for hire and very likely they will have something suitable, either from their own horses or from among the boarders."

She thanked him and paid for the rifle, ordering it to be sent to the hotel. By the help of the traffic policeman, she was able to board the right car and soon found herself at the Horse Show Building, a long yellow wooden

erection of a somewhat pretentious appearance. On entering, she found the manager in the office and told him just what she wanted. He was an Irishman, thick-set and plump, of an aquiline cast of features, an expensive manner and persuasive brogue. As he talked to her she could almost imagine she had known him for years, he was so intimate and friendly.

"Well, miss, believe me, if you had hunted all over Canada you couldn't have come to a better place to get what you wanted; for I think that I've got the very thing for you. There's a lady here that bought a horse for herself to ride; but she isn't a rider at all and the horse is a bit too fresh for her. He's gentle enough, you understand; but he's got breeding and life, and he has to be ridden with 'hands.' Now, miss, just to look at you I could tell that you had 'hands.' "

"And how could you tell that now?" said Marjorie smiling.

"Well, then, just by the step of you, and the very way you came in that door just now. This lady I speak of now, poor thing, she hasn't any 'hands' and she never will have them. 'Hands' are somethin' that are born with us, miss, and if we don't get them before we're put in the cradle, we never get them at all. Charlie," he called, "bring up that little bay of Miss Morris'."

"Oh, you want the horse for a boy, do you?" he went on volubly, when Marjorie had explained. "Sorry, miss, I thought it was for yourself. Well, he's a little bit lifey, but if the boy's a good sort of a boy, an' the makin's of a rider in him, this little fellow is just the thing."

They went out on the floor and the horse was brought up from the stables below. He was certainly a fine little animal, a dark bay with a long mane and tail. He arched

his pretty neck and allowed Marjorie to fondle his velvety nose.

"He's just fourteen two and rising six, miss, and he'd carry you beautifully. Miss Morris calls him Puck. I s'pose 'cos he's a kind of a pickle, but I'm sure he'd be all right with anybody that had the least bit o' feelings for a horse. You've followed the hounds, haven't you, miss?"

"Oh, yes," she said; "but I never was a great deal of good at the fences."

"Now, wouldn't ye like to put on a habit and try the little horse? There's a dressing room right here and you can pick one that'll fit. If you ever get on his back, shure you're going to buy him."

Marjorie was nothing loath, and in the course of a few minutes she was cantering round the arena, a huge place that was the second largest of its kind on the continent, Mr. Callaghan, the manager, did not fail to tell her. It felt good to be on a horse's back again. Puck's gait was delightful and his mouth like a kid glove. It was easy to see, though, that he might be a difficult handful for an incompetent rider.

"I knew that he would suit ye," said Mr. Callaghan with enthusiasm, lapsing into a more pronounced brogue; "an' troth the pair of ye make as pretty a picture as any one could wish for. To look at you one would think ye were Irish an' that's as foine a compliment as I could pay you, miss. He's just proud to have you on his back, aren't you, Puck?"

Marjorie dismounted and before she had left the building she had purchased the horse for a hundred dollars on a deposit of twenty-five; and he was to be kept until she was ready to take him. She also arranged for a saddle and bridle. It was after four when she got back to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXI

Is she wronged? To the rescue of her honour,
My heart!

R. Browning.

Keith had had rather a busy day calling on friends and attending to various matters of business. He lunched with one of these at the Vancouver Club and he did not get back to the hotel till about five. There he went at once to his room and was just having a wash when the telephone rang.

"Is this Mr. Leicester?" a man's voice enquired. "This is Mr. Graham, the manager, speaking. I wonder if you would mind coming down to my office for a minute, Mr. Leicester. I'm sorry to disturb you but I should be obliged if you could come right away."

"Why, yes, Mr. Graham, if you'll just wait half a minute I will come down"; and he made haste to dry his hands and put on his collar.

"What can the man want?" he asked himself as he went down in the elevator. "I've scarcely spoken to him before."

He had little time to speculate, however, before the door was opened to him and he was asked to step in. It was a large room handsomely furnished; and he was greatly surprised to see Marjorie sitting in an armchair by the window. There were two other men besides Mr. Graham. Keith bowed coldly to Marjorie and took the chair that was offered to him. He was not introduced to

the two men. There seemed to be an air of constraint upon all.

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Leicester, for coming so promptly," said the manager rather nervously. "You will be surprised at this summons I'm sure; but the circumstances are rather extraordinary. Perhaps, Inspector Brown," he said turning to the larger of the two men, "you will be good enough to explain them to Mr. Leicester."

"It's this way, sir, you see. This gentleman and I," the inspector began, indicating the other man, "belong to the city's detective force. We have had instructions for some time to be on the lookout for a female diamond thief that has been operating in the Eastern cities. She's been layin' low for the last three or four months and nothing has been heard of her; but sooner or later, you know, she was pretty well bound to be at her old tricks again. Now, I happened to drop into old Sam Prince's pawnshop to-day; an' he was telling me about a rather suspicious-looking female who had come to his place to sell some jewelry but who had skipped just as soon as he began to ask questions. He watched her go up to Sherman's and she went in there, he said.

"Well, I thought it wouldn't do any harm for me to drop into Sherman's too and find out about this party with the shiners. I discovered sure enough that he had arranged to buy a purty fine piece of stuff for a matter of three hundred dollars. He told me that she had had a number of other pretty fine things, too, but that that was all he had bought.

"He gave me the description of the girl and sure enough it answered to that of the thief that was 'wanted' in the East. She had given her address as the Hotel Vancouver, so I got Bill here to come with me on the chance that it

might be the right one—for they're mighty artful and bold, some of these characters. She was here right enough, and so we put Mr. Graham wise and had her brought in. Now she denies the whole thing an' she says that you can tell us who she is and all about her."

During this long harangue, Keith had listened half bewildered. At first, he could not comprehend what the man was driving at. Marjorie sat opposite him, her face slightly averted and her little foot tapping the floor with impatience. There was a tenseness of suffering and shame on her face, however, that compelled his pity even although he had not forgotten her cavalier treatment of him in the morning. It was not long before he had gathered from the detective's harangue what was the nature of the crisis that she was facing.

The realisation struck him like a blow in the face. That she could be a notorious thief, at first, seemed impossible, and he could not square it with the conception he had formed of her. Yet, after all, it flashed through his mind that he knew next to nothing of her, and she had arrived at Portlake under rather peculiar circumstances. Nor had she ever seemed willing to talk about her life in England or her friends; and any leading remarks or questions of his had always been met with a wall of reserve that he had never been able to break down. Even the Boltons had refused to talk about her. These thoughts flashed upon him almost before he realised that she was speaking.

"Yes, Mr. Leicester," she was saying and her voice was tremulous, whether with indignation or fear; "will you please tell these men how absurd is this accusation; that I am not a—a—not what they say I am."

"Why, gentlemen," he hastened to say, "there must be some ridiculous mistake here. This lady, Miss Coon, is well known to me."

"What did you say her name was?" asked Inspector Brown quickly.

"Miss Coon."

"How do you spell it, please?"

"Why, C-o-o-n, I suppose."

"Rather peculiar," said the Inspector turning with a dry smile to Mr. Graham. "She writes it Colquhoun in your register."

Marjorie flushed and bit her lip. She started to speak and then stopped herself.

"How long have you known the young lady, Mr. Leicester, might I ask?"

"Oh, for some time," said Keith, seeing the dangerous drift of the question. "She is a near neighbour of mine. We are a rather primitive set in our district, you know, and if we pronounce Colquhoun, Coon, I suppose it's nobody's business but our own, especially if Miss Colquhoun here is too careful of our feelings to set us straight. Our hearts are all right even if our spelling is faulty."

Keith found himself taking sides with the weaker party even though his judgment told him that appearances were entirely against her. Even after the way she had treated him that morning, his manhood demanded that he should not desert her in a pinch like this while there was the shadow of a chance of her being innocent. At the same time he did not want to have anything to do with compounding a felony. It was a nasty mess even for a mere acquaintance to be mixed up in; but with the feelings he had already begun to entertain for the girl, the matter touched him very closely. If she were innocent and he failed her, his chances to win her were inevitably gone forever; forgiveness was out of the question; while if the charge was true and he aided her to escape from the hands of justice, he

not only made himself a laughing stock but he laid himself open to disagreeable consequences from the law.

"Would you mind telling us just exactly how long you have known the young lady?" now put in the other man who had not as yet spoken; "'for some time' is hardly definite enough for our purposes, it seems to me."

To say that he had only known her for four months would be to discredit any testimony he might offer in her favour, so to cover his evasion Keith let himself be carried away in a fine passion of indignation.

"Now, see here, my man, I consider this persecution of Miss Colquhoun a downright piece of impertinence; and I would have you understand that you had better go very carefully in the matter. I am neither in the witness box nor in the dock; and any information I can give you is for your benefit and with the view of saving you from making yourselves laughing-stocks by persisting any further in this ridiculous mistake."

"That's as it may be," interrupted Inspector Brown; "but I don't see why you would object to tell us, if you're so intimate with the young lady as you would have us believe."

"I tell you this," continued Keith; "I have known Miss Colquhoun ever since she came to this country and she is living with very estimable people whom I have known for years."

"Ever since she came here!" burst out the Inspector scornfully. "Well, that's only four months, as she told us before you came in."

This took the wind out of Keith's sails; and he flushed scarlet in spite of himself.

"Is it likely," he said, "that if Miss Colquhoun were what you suspect her of being that she would come to a hotel like the 'Vancouver'? I leave it to Mr. Graham here

whether he is much troubled by notorious thieves taking refuge under his roof."

"The most likely thing in the world with this woman," again burst in the Inspector. "She is the very slickest thing in thieves. Dresses quietly and in the best of taste; frequents the very best hotels; why, in Detroit, she even took a lot of diamonds she had stolen to a banker and got a big advance on them; and left him holding the bag. By all accounts, her manners are simply perfect; and it wouldn't be surprising if she could take in a gentleman like yourself."

Marjorie rose to her feet and faced the Inspector.

"Oh, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves to bully a defenceless girl," she protested, her voice trembling with indignation and distress. "Haven't I told you I am not this infamous person you describe? I have never been in Detroit or the United States in my life. The jewels I have with me are my own and I have a right to sell them if I want to."

"That is all very well, Miss Colquhoun," said Mr. Graham soothingly, "but you must realise that these gentlemen are only trying to do their duty, and all they want to know is your proper identity. If they are mistaken in taking you for this person, no doubt, they will only be too glad to acknowledge their mistake and depart. But they expect you to do all you can to help them by proving you are not the party. So far, you have not done this but have shown a hostile attitude throughout. For instance, you refuse to say who are your people in the old country, which on the face of it is a very suspicious circumstance. You can surely have no valid reason for doing this."

"I have very valid and substantial reasons for doing so, I can assure you," said Marjorie, "and I refuse, just because an over-zealous police officer stumbles upon a

mare's nest, to upset my own private affairs just to prove to him that I am not the criminal he thinks I am. Let him wire to the East for further information in the matter and find out his mistake that way. He will find me here if I am wanted; I can assure him I do not intend to run away unless back to Portlake where he can easily find me."

"That's all very well, miss, but how are we to be sure of that?" said the Inspector with rather a grim smile. "We're quite willing to make further inquiries; but in the meantime, we shall have to place you under arrest. You see, looking at it from a professional standpoint, if you should be Slippy Sal—which is the name the police on the other side have for this party—your capture will be quite a coup for Bob here an' me to pull off; an' besides there's a nice little reward of two thousand plunks for us to share."

The girl staggered back and leant against the table for support. Her face was pale but she held her head up bravely. Keith cursed himself for his helplessness and the ignominious part he seemed to be playing; but for the life of him he could not help a feeling of doubt in his mind as to whether he had been fooled or not. Stories he had read of charming and beautiful adventuresses would obtrude themselves upon his memory in spite of himself; and truth to tell, he could not help recalling her behaviour of the morning.

"Oh, now, that's nonsense, you know," he said; "you can't arrest Miss Colquhoun on a mere piece of baseless suspicion. Her suggestion is very proper that she should stay here until you have time to get your proofs from the East; and if you can get them, then you can go ahead as you please. I suppose the best way would be to wire to have the photograph of this Slippy Sal, or whatever you

call her, sent forward and then your suspicions will be finally demolished."

The two inspectors looked at each other and both shook their heads.

"No, no," said Brown with a grim laugh. "She'll have to go along with us. Bob and I ain't going to take any chances with that two thousand. We are too old birds to be caught with chaff. You're young an' impressionable, my friend, and a pretty face is everything to you, but it don't go down with us. Why, man," he went on, "you don't know who her people are yourself, and you say she's a great friend of yours. You'd better look out and not get yourself into trouble."

Keith was at his wit's end to know what to do. The men were evidently determined that they were not going to run the chance of losing the reward; and the only way for them to be sure that the girl would not escape was to arrest her. The thought was terrible to him. There must surely be some alternative.

"Inspector Brown," he said, an idea striking him; "have you taken out a warrant for Miss Colquhoun?"

The Inspector hesitated and looked at his colleague.

"Not yet," he said; "but Bob will have one here in half an hour and I'll see that she doesn't give us the slip in the meantime."

"Well, just wait a bit, my friend. Do you mind, Mr. Graham, if Miss Colquhoun and I confer for a moment in your inner office? You needn't be afraid," he said smiling at the Inspector who was about to object. "We are not going to run away, are we, Miss Coon—I mean Colquhoun? There's no other door and we certainly shan't jump out the window."

"I guess there's no objection then," said the Inspector grudgingly.

Keith led the way and she followed him. She was trembling and her lip quivered as she turned to face him. She could not trust herself to speak. As he looked at her, there was a moment of temptation to take her in his arms to comfort her; and he felt his suspicions melting away in his pity. By an effort, however, he kept command of himself.

"This is a rum business," he said; "and it's a pity you can't see your way to satisfying them about your people at home. However, I suppose you have good enough reasons. I am sorry they won't take my word for your respectability; but I suppose, in a way, you can't blame them. It's their business to be suspicious of people."

"What can I do?" she said. "If only Bolton were here he could tell them about me; but they might refuse to believe him even. There isn't time to get him here tonight and I should detest the humiliation of it. I've gone through enough of that already."

"What I was going to propose to you is this," said Keith. "The chief thing these men are worrying about is the reward. Of course, the glory counts with them too but the reward is the chief thing. Now I have some money down here to my credit in the bank, and I can put up security of two thousand dollars with Mr. Graham here—a sort of bail you might call it—that you'll not run away."

She smiled a wry little smile.

"Aren't you taking a pretty big risk?" she asked. "I really don't think that you are quite sure of me yourself."

"Why, of course, I am," he assured her; but for the life of him he could not give his voice the heartiness that he wanted. "Let us go back now and arrange it with them."

They went back to the outer room again and she took her seat. Keith remained standing by the window.

"You say that no warrant has been issued for Miss Colquhoun," he said, "so I gather that you are not in any way committed to arrest her until you have the fullest proof. Is that correct?"

"Quite correct," said the Inspector.

"Well, then, I would like to arrange this with you. If you arrest Miss Colquhoun now, you will be very sorry for it in a few days from now when you find out your mistake. But I am willing to put up two thousand dollars with Mr. Graham here as security for his reward, or bail if you like, that Miss Colquhoun will not run away. I shall give him a letter authorising him to pay you the money if she does so. If you find out that Miss Colquhoun is not the party you suspect she is, I shall still give you each twenty-five dollars for falling in with my suggestion now."

"That's all very well," said the Inspector, "but you see, sir, while we are after the reward all right, duty comes even before that. If a criminal was to escape because of our neglect, we would have the two thousand all right; but not with a clear conscience. Furthermore, I'm going to tell you, sir—and it is only fair to warn you—that if she escaped it would look mighty nasty for you. Misprision of felony is a serious business, I can tell you."

"Perhaps I might offer a suggestion," said Mr. Graham. "Mr. Leicester is not going to put up his good money unless he knows that Miss Colquhoun is all right. I'm quite inclined to give her the benefit of the doubt myself. Now I would propose this. You were going to stay in town for a day or two anyway, weren't you, Miss Colquhoun?"

She nodded.

"And you, Mr. Leicester?"

"Well, then, why couldn't Miss Colquhoun agree not to leave the hotel or go to the dining room unless in company with Mr. Leicester? You wouldn't be afraid he would voluntarily let her run off and forfeit his two thousand dollars, would you?" he said to the Inspector.

"No, I don't think that would be at all likely," was the reply.

"Now then, I'll agree, for my part, to keep a bell-boy always on watch near Miss Colquhoun's door and if she leaves her room without her gaoler, I shall at once be notified and so shall you. It's hardly likely she could get out of the city before you would catch her. At least, I think that you might take a chance on that if Mr. Leicester is willing to risk his two thousand dollars. One must risk something for the sake of being gallant, you know; and I must say to judge by appearances, Miss Colquhoun is a most charming and estimable young lady and I am deeply sorry for this annoyance to her while she is a guest of this hotel. What would you think of that scheme, Inspector?"

The Inspector grunted.

"Humph, a rum kind of a scheme it seems to me; but seeing you appear to think the party is all right and if Mr. Leicester here can find the money in the next half hour, I don't mind taking a chance. We must see his money first, though."

"What do you say, Mr. Leicester?"

"I don't see the necessity for any of this spying business myself; but if it's the only thing that will satisfy the man, why I suppose, if it suits Miss Colquhoun, it's the best way out of a bad job. It puts me in rather an ungrateful rôle, however; but I'm sure I would do my best to show her the sights until the matter is settled. What do you say?"

She smiled although the tears were in her eyes.

"I think if I must have a gaoler I would prefer you to these"; and with a gesture of disdain she turned her back upon the two officers.

"Then, that is settled," said Keith much relieved. "May I use your telephone, Mr. Graham, to call up the bank? And if you could give me a Royal Bank cheque, please, and have your stenographer type the letter of instructions. It's after hours but I guess I can get the manager to see that it is cashed.

"Hello, is this the Royal Bank? Give me the manager, please," he said when he had got the number. "This is Leicester—Leicester of Portlake, you know. I'm sending a cheque for two thousand dollars down from the hotel. Would you mind cashing it for me, please, as a special favour? Yes, it'll be made payable to bearer."

He wrote out the cheque and Mr. Graham with kindly tact invited the officers to the bar for some refreshment. They were somewhat loath to leave before they had seen the money arrive, to judge by their backward glances, but they did so although with some misgivings.

Keith and Miss Colquhoun were left alone. He felt miserably tongue-tied and embarrassed. The arrangement that had just been made was so extraordinary that he could not quite see how it would strike her. Very likely she would hate him for it although he had done the best he could.

He turned to look at her and she was in tears. She had turned from him and her slender shoulders quivered with the violence of her sobs. She had kept her self-control all through the interview and now that the strain was over, the reaction had come.

Keith longed to comfort her but the only way that appeared at all adequate—to take her in his arms—he was

afraid to adopt although he found the impulse almost irresistible. Adventuress or no, he would have cheerfully yielded to it had he thought it would be welcomed; but he was by no means sure of how she regarded his part in the scene that had just taken place. He, himself, could not look back on it with any satisfaction. Where he might have been ardent he had been lukewarm in her defence; and he felt he would not be surprised if Miss Colquhoun should look with cold favour on the efforts he had displayed on her behalf. Past experience with her, he felt, had not led him to expect any too lively gratitude for services rendered. He was the more surprised at himself for the tender glow which the thought of her invariably kindled within him ever since the night of the dance; and he felt that his heart had got the better of his reasoning faculties in succumbing to one who was capricious and exacting.

He would have been astonished had he known that in the flood of conflicting emotions that were surging through the girl's breast not the least potent was the shame for that very caprice and pettishness that he had found so disappointing, and the humiliation of the coals of fire which he had heaped upon her head. For Marjorie had seen enough of the world to realise how much appearances were against her and what courage and contempt of circumstances he had shown in doing what he had. She could see very well that he was by no means assured, himself, of her honesty; and she admired the daring that made him ready to stake so much on it where the chances appeared perhaps even for and against her.

To give her time to recover herself, Keith went over to the table and lit a cigar; and while he busied himself about this, making the operation last as long as possible, she was able to regain control of herself and to wipe her eyes.

"I hope you don't mind my smoking," he said when he saw she was herself again; "but I sort of feel the need of it. I see you've found your safety-valve; and this I suppose is mine. A cigar has a wonderfully soothing effect, you know, when the nerves are a bit strained."

"I'm sorry to have made a goose of myself," she said, her voice rather tremulous; "but the whole thing has been so distressing. And I am so vexed at putting you in such an awkward predicament. When I told them to call you I thought all that would be necessary would be for you to say that you knew me. I—I—w-want to tell you that I am sorry for the way I treated you on the train this morning. I am sure I didn't deserve that you should champion me as you did."

"Oh, don't worry about that," said Keith. "I have my own cranky moods, and I know how to make allowances for those of others."

"I cannot thank you now but——" her voice choked and he could see that she was strongly moved.

"Don't try to for a moment," he said interrupting her. "It is time you had a rest. Suppose you go now to your room and try to have a nap before dinner. I shall come for you in an hour and we will go down together, if you are to allow me to play the rôle that was laid down for me. I shall try to be as little of a nuisance as possible."

"Do you think I may go?" she said; "or will they be making a fuss if I leave before the money is here?"

"Go right along," said Keith. "I'll answer to them."

CHAPTER XXII

There's a land where the mountains are nameless,
And the rivers all run God knows where.
ROBERT W. SERVICE.

IT was a very different girl that entered the dining room an hour and a half later with Keith from the one he had parted with in the manager's room. She wore a dinner-gown of pink which by some good luck or prescient instinct she had brought with her and the traces of tears were gone. True there was, perhaps, it seemed to Keith, something of a chastened look about the eyes and a new humility that was, he thought, vastly becoming; and as they walked together down the brilliantly appointed room, full of gaily-gowned women and men, many of whom were in evening dress, he was aware of a keen sense of elation and he was little inclined to quarrel with the trick the gods had played him. He had expected, had she arrived in time, to have been dining with his old love; but as Marjorie sat down opposite to him at the table for two in the far corner of the big room, he felt grateful for the delay that made the exchange possible.

She, too, had her emotions and they were not unpleasant ones. For one to whom a certain luxury had been a part of the daily order of things to return to such a scene of life and colour and attired in a manner to show to advantage the charms of her person brought alone distinct satisfaction; and although her partner was still wearing the quiet tweed suit he had worn in the afternoon, she felt

that with his easy bearing and distinguished cast of features he did her no discredit.

"You know," he was saying, "when I think that but for him you would probably be sitting in lonely grandeur at one end of the room and I in similar splendid isolation at the other, I can't somehow think so hardly of that officious little inspector after all."

"I don't want to think about him," she said with a little grimace. "I'd rather talk about Dicky if you please."

"So should I," he assented heartily. "Dicky's a treasure."

"That reminds me," she said with a sigh, "that I must write to-night and let them know that I shall not be home when I expected. Dicky will be down at to-morrow's train and he'll be greatly disappointed when he finds that I'm not there. You see I have undertaken to play the rôle of fairy godmother to him."

"A charming rôle indeed!" said Keith. "I congratulate you."

"One would have thought so," she responded smiling somewhat ruefully; "but I have found it a rather arduous and unpleasant one, in its preliminary stages at least."

"You don't mean to say that it was for that that you were selling the diamonds?" said Keith in astonishment.

"The Boltons were hard up," she confessed. "It is only fair to you to tell you in order that you may know that your two thousand dollars is not in danger. I had the jewels of my own and I had no use for them at present; and the money was needed. I decided that I would have the pleasure of playing the fairy godmother to Dicky as well."

Outwardly Keith remained unmoved but he felt that a load had been lifted off his mind. How could he ever

have doubted her? He was relieved of the necessity of immediate reply by the approach of the waiter for his order. At her request he ordered for both.

"You have not told me of what your bounties are going to consist," he remarked when this weighty matter had been disposed of.

"After the approved fashion in fairy lore," she said smiling, "I offered him three wishes and, to get him to speak his true desires, I had to make him think it was all make-believe. So he declared for a bay pony with a long tail, a 'twenty-two rifle' and an illustrated copy of Peter Pan."

"Bravo! for Dicky," said Keith; "but, of course, you don't intend to give him all these, do you?"

"I have them all now," she averred proudly. "At least, I have paid for two of them but the pony will have to wait until the pawnbroker man—I suppose to be correct I should say 'my uncle'—is satisfied that both the jewels and the vendor are above suspicion."

"If there is any vacancy for a second godchild, please, I think that I would like to apply for the place," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"You're too old and you're too rich," she objected with mock seriousness.

"But you haven't bought the pony yet?" he asked.

"I bought him this afternoon and he's down at the Horse Show Building. I tried his paces myself and they are splendid."

"Suppose we go for a ride to-morrow morning," he suggested. "I daresay I could hire a steed that would carry me."

"Aren't you forgetting the lady whom you came down to meet," she said, a trifle roguishly.

"Don't let's speak of her," he said with a frown and then

a smile; "let her be taboo along with your Inspector. It will be time enough to consider her when she arrives."

They had finished the fish course and she was leaning back in her chair enjoying the scene around her. Keith sat admiring the delicate flush of her cheek and the whiteness of her neck against the pink of her dress. There was something exquisitely graceful in the poise of her head and, apart from its fineness of feature and harmony of colouring, something of indefinable charm in her face. It lay deeper than the mere physical, Keith reflected, some rare quality of personality, some subtle essence of spiritual beauty that looked out through the deep-blue eyes varying in their hue like the sea or suggested itself in the sensitive line of her mobile mouth, or in the winning grace of her smile. This was the first time really that he had had a chance to speak to her under conditions that were favourable; and the attraction that he had felt towards her before, he now realised to be greatly strengthened. She had put aside the air of reserve with which she had formerly treated him—the distant politeness which one exhibits towards an acquaintance of whose intentions one is doubtful—for the confiding intimacy of a friend. Yet underneath the soft feminine charm of her manner which he found so delightful, there was an ease of bearing and a poise unusual in a young girl. He was grateful, too, for the quiet way in which she had accepted what was a difficult situation for both of them, without fuss or affectation, and so had done away with a large part of its unpleasantness.

"Do you know," she said, "that I feel almost as if I were in a dream. My life has been so different since I came out to this country, so quiet and uneventful; and now, to-day, so much seems to have happened and I can hardly believe the reality of it all. There is a something about

this city, you know, with its lovely harbour and magnificent mountains all around—a glamour that seems to thrill me somehow. I have never had exactly the same feeling with a European city and I have been in a great many of them."

"It is the glamour of the new to one who has only had to do with the older lands," suggested Keith. "I still have the same feeling when I look from my front veranda at home away out to the Golden Ears and the Blue Mountains, with the great forests about their slopes; and when I think that the Golden Ears were climbed for the first time a year or so ago and that the Blue Mountains are unreached as yet except by a few daring prospectors, I feel a thrill too. It is the lure of the unknown."

"Yes, I have felt that thrill myself," she said, and her face was touched with a shade of sadness, "when the sun was shining and my heart was light; but when the shadows fall, and one is homesick or dejected, the loneliness of these unpeopled places is apt to fill one with awe and depression."

"When I get that sort of feeling," said Keith with a laugh, "I go and cut down a tree or dig out a stump and work it off my system that way. Nature is always preaching to us. As Lowell says:

'Against our fallen and traitor lives,
The great winds utter prophecies;'

but it doesn't do to listen to them or we are likely to lose heart. Myself, I try to see her sunny side."

"That is the best way, no doubt," she agreed. "The pessimist is never a valuable member of the community. I am fond of Emerson's cheery philosophy. 'The carrion in the sun,' he says, 'will convert itself into grass and flowers and man though in jails or on gibbets is on his way to all that is good and true.' "

"Yes, 'tis a fine creed. What a boon such men as he

have been to their fellows! What an encouragement when things are going wrong. Stevenson was another. His own life was full of suffering but all that he gave out was full of sweetness and light. Poor old Carlyle, on the other hand, prophet and seer as he was, gives most people the blues."

"But look what is going on in the West," he said breaking off and pointing out through the window where the setting sun was suffusing the sky with a crimson glow. "Let us go down to English Bay and go out in a canoe for an hour or so."

"Oh, I have never been in a canoe," she said, but her face fell. "I think that I had better not go, however, thank you," she went on and her tone was one of regret; "I must write to Dicky, you know."

"Please," he begged. "You can write Dicky when you come back. Take pity on my loneliness in a strange city. It would be positively criminal to waste this lovely evening in a stuffy hotel bedroom. Such a night and the opportunity may never come again," and Keith thought with a pang of Patricia speeding rapidly westward on the train.

"I hardly think I ought," she said but her tone was less decided.

"You've never known the charms of English Bay at sundown," he said, waxing eloquent, "the shimmering tints of crimson and violet and yellow and gold; the opalescent splendours as the radiance gradually dies away; the dark blues and purples of the hills outlined against the sky; the flickering lights of the fishing boats away out near the horizon; and then, landward, the beach full of people and behind, the town all cheery with its street lamps and its countless gleaming windows."

"It sounds alluring," she said with a smile.

"The winds are calling and the summer moon," he softly urged. "Come."

CHAPTER XXIII

So silently we two
Lounge in our still canoe,
Nor fate nor fortune matters to us now;
So long as we alone
May call this dream our own,
The breeze may die, the sail may droop,
We care not when or how.

PAULINE JOHNSON.

"IT is everything that you said for it and a hundred times more," said Marjorie with enthusiasm.

They had paddled away past Second Beach with its crescent of yellow sand and its dainty pavilion nestling against the trees; and then out as far as Ferguson Point skirting the wooded shores of Stanley Park on which they could see every now and then the bright lights of a motor passing along the driveway. Then they had turned seaward for half a mile or so and made a detour and now they were again approaching the Beach and the Promenade Pier they had left.

She reclined on pillows in the bow of the canoe while he knelt upright in the stern looking down on her, paddling with long, easy strokes that appeared to require but slight effort and yet carried the light craft along at a fair rate of speed. He had doffed hat and coat and rolled up his sleeves and when she looked at him as she needs must at times, and noted the easy, rhythmic swing of his arms, the play of the muscles beneath the white skin and the strong, clean-cut face browned with the sun, she

could not but admit to herself that he made a figure picturesque enough to be in full harmony with the scene and the craft that bore them, itself light and graceful enough for a fairy shallop.

"Then I am a hundred times rewarded to know that it has your approval," he said, smiling down upon her.

"And the night is perfect," she continued, with a sigh of contentment. "That dim outline of land on the horizon might well be that of 'the fortunate isles'! the fabulous islands of the blessed."

"Yes, or you might call it *Ultima Thule,* although it is hardly distant enough. That is Vancouver Island; and the islanders themselves would willingly uphold the truth of your conjecture. For they claim wonderful things for it in the way of climate and resources."

"And those flickering lights are fishing boats, are they?" she queried. "It is a strange enough life to be out that way all night beneath the stars," she mused. "And yet I suppose a happy one. Not much to fret one so long as the weather keeps fine."

"At least, a more eventful life than that of the lighthouse keeper over there," said Keith, nodding towards where Point Atkinson flashed its intermittent beam across the water.

"Not a more inspiring one though, I should think. It must be grand to think that week in, week out through sunshine and tempest one remains steadfast keeping the light burning for the safety and protection of all that pass."

"Yes, in one way, it is a godlike vocation; but oh, so lonely for a mere human being."

She was silent for a while, gazing wistfully across the water.

"Loneliness is a terrible thing after all. I did not

realise it until I left home to come out here. I had never been among strangers before."

"You certainly must have thought me a brute that night I drove you up," said Keith, squirming inwardly at the remembrance.

"I certainly thought you were condescending," and she smiled up at him. "I had heard of the superior airs of the Englishman abroad on the journey over but I did not think I was so soon to experience them."

"But you are English yourself, are you not?" he said.

"No, I was born in Scotland and my family is Scottish, although I have lived most of my life in England."

It was on Keith's tongue to ask more but he restrained himself, feeling that it was for her to give, not for him to solicit her confidence. But she turned away from the subject.

"I have heard canoeing spoken of as the poetry of motion," she remarked; "now I can recognise the aptness of the phrase. Lying here in this glorious summer twilight, it seems hard to realise that one must go back to the grim realities of life. You have given me great enjoyment to-night."

It was now so dim that he could not clearly see her features; but there was a note of grateful acknowledgment in her voice that made his heart leap to hear it. There was a somethng of intimacy too, for which he was glad. He wondered if, by the grim realities of life, she was thinking of Inspector Brown, but he had not the hardihood to ask. That some sorrow or anxiety was troubling her, was evident, however.

They had now come quite close to the beach again and Keith swung the canoe round broadside-on to it and stopped their way, so that she could have a view.

Numerous bathers were still swimming about or div-

ing from the high platform of the raft or sliding swiftly down the chute, their wet bodies glistening white in the moonlight, while launches and rowboats and dainty canoes glided slowly in and out among them. At one end of the beach, on a tiny stage erected with its back to the sea, the Pierrots were entertaining their nightly audience spread out on the sand and thronging the high bank before them; and at the other, round a huge bonfire of driftwood, a group of small boys in their bathing suits toasted their shivering bodies, gleaming like copper in the glow of its blaze. The boulevard above it all was thronged with people, carriages and motors; and in the bandstand beyond, a band was playing and the strains, softened by the distance, sounded sweetly over the water. The air was "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms," Moore's fine old ballad.

Both remained silent for a while drinking in the beauty of the spectacle and listening to the haunting cadences of the melody. Keith was the first to speak.

"Those youngsters by the fire are having a glorious time; all through the summer every night you see them roasting and shivering at the same time," he said. "That is the sort of thing that Dick would enjoy. That reminds me, too," the sight of the ring of Cupids had recalled his jest with Dicky, "if you are taking a gun to him, I must take him a bow and arrows."

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, he remembered that Dick had repeated his playful remark about his message making him worthy of wings and a bow and arrows to Marjorie on the night of the dance during the ride home; and that she had probably made a shrewd guess at the application. He instantly reviled himself for his carelessness but hoped the remark would pass unnoticed.

The hope, however, was but shortlived. The girl had,

indeed, been quick to take note; and all the humiliation that she had felt, the night of the dance, after she had found that Keith had taken her at the request of Mrs. Bolton, came back to her. The remarks about him made by the girl she had met, and Dicky's naïve betrayal of the little jest about the latter's being the little god of love—all the indignation and injury to her pride she had felt at the time—came back to her. Then the contempt she had felt when told by Forrest Eaton how Mr. Leicester had punished the boy, evidently for having given away the secret the night before, passed through her mind.

She had not done right, she felt, in coming out alone in this way with a man she hardly knew, and of whom, in spite of a charm of manner and a real likeableness which she could not deny, she had reason to entertain grave doubts. Staying alone in a strange city without any chaperon or protector, she had the more need to walk circumspectly. Circumstances extraordinary had forced her to accept a favour from him and a certain amount of his company as well for several days, at least; and it came to her now for the first time with some force, that the situation was one which called for the exercise of the utmost prudence.

"It is getting late I am afraid, and time we were getting home," she said; and slight as was the change in her tone he did not fail to mark it. The friendly note of intimacy had gone.

He did not waste time in argument but turning the head of the canoe paddled slowly to the pier where they were soon landed. They took the car to the hotel and little was said on the way back. As she said good-night at the elevator, she thanked him for the enjoyment of the evening; but he felt that there was a constraint in her man-

ner and her words were perfunctory rather than the spontaneous expression of her feelings.

So in the halcyon hours of sweet companionship between a man and a maid, the honey is often of a sudden made bitter by the gall. The very purity and the intensity of the joy occasioned by the pair's mutual presence, the very ecstasy of the glamour that surrounds the first dawning of love's passion, makes the danger of reaction the greater. There is all the fairy-like beauty of the butterfly's wing but with all its tenuous fragility; all its shimmering iridescence in the sunlight but with its tendency to droop dull and lustreless under the unfriendly rain. Keith had something of this in his mind as he sought the solace of a cigar in the smoking-room. Their hour of companionship in the soft summer twilight had been so sweet, so perfect in the sense of a complete accord of sympathies between them and in the idyllic environment of sea and sky and balmy evening breeze. And then to end so disappointingly! It had been like a jarring discord at the close of a strain of sweet music.

The same shimmering opal sea, the same summer sky and the same girl sitting in the canoe beside him—would it ever come again, he wondered; and sighed as he threw away his cigar and rose to seek his room.

And Marjorie, too, couched in her chamber by the turret, like some mediæval maiden, in the great hostelry teeming with its multitudinous guests, what were her thoughts as she looked out over the city with its twinkling lights and the quiet Inlet to the great mountain barrier across the northern sky? Something there was in them, no doubt, of similar disappointment, of a sense of rude awakening from a pleasant dream. She, too, had had her emotions and her heart throbbed with unwonted thrills and was stirred by a strange disquietude.

CHAPTER XXIV

Write till your ink be dry; and with your tears
Moist it again; and frame some feeling line,
That may discover such integrity.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE next morning, to Keith's distress, Marjorie sent down word that she was going to breakfast in her room. He had hoped that the night would bring counsel, and she would be ready to forget the displeasure occasioned by his unfortunate reference.

"There's something she hasn't forgiven me for yet; and I can't just make up my mind what it is," he thought to himself as he sat at his breakfast and, in spite of his perplexity, did ample justice to a plate of bacon and eggs, not to mention the grape fruit, porridge and hotcakes. "I shall have it out with her, anyway, the first opportunity, and clear the air. I can't afford to lose any time."

Marjorie on her side had not slept much through the night and the headache that she pleaded was no sham one. There had been another of these annoying altercations going on inside of her. This time it was between her heart and her reason; and the two of them had been hard at it, all night long.

"You are letting yourself be affected by this young farmer who is continually thrusting himself in your way," scolded Reason.

"He has been kind to me and I can not be altogether rude to him in return, can I?" said her heart in defence.

"You will find yourself caught before you know it.

The fellow, very likely, is just amusing himself with you; if what Miss Arbuthnot told you is true," scoffed Reason.

"I don't believe it. Mr. Leicester is a gentleman if appearances go for anything. His manner, his conversation and his kindly tact, everything shows it," answered Heart with some warmth.

"Much kindliness he showed when he thrashed poor Dicky for giving his secrets away," nagged Reason again.

"There may have been some cause for it that you don't know of," urged Heart; and so the two went on.

However, in the end Reason had the best of it for Marjorie did not go down to breakfast; and when Keith telephoned, after he had finished his, to ask if she was going out with him, she said no. She had a bad headache and she did not know whether she would be down to lunch either. Her tone was so cold that he had not the heart to argue the matter with her; and so he hung up the tube and went into the writing room, much cast down.

He felt sure that the headache was simply a subterfuge. Patricia had been subject to headaches of this kind and he had learned to dread them. A headache was so often a euphemism for the sulks.

He thought that he would write her a few lines asking what he had done to offend her; but after making one or two attempts, he gave it up. He could not strike just the note that he wanted.

All at once, he had an idea.

"I'll write her in rhyme," he said to himself, "in a humorous strain that will make her laugh. She can't hold her anger if she laughs. That's good psychology. I used to write half-way decent verse at college and what's the good of an Oxford education if it can't help a fellow out in a crisis like this."

He decided that the ballade form was the most suitable

for the tone, half jesting half in earnest, that he wished to adopt; and burying himself at a table over in the corner of the room, in an hour or so he had produced the following:

To Coventry I'm sent to pine
And lonely here I must remain
Until your pity shall incline
To call me to your side again:
It would not give me half the pain—
For pain there is, one can't deny—
One's penance one would not complain
If one but knew the reason why!

A place of punishment condign
Enough to make one go insane;
The streets all bare; no face, in fine
To cheer one; just as if again
The fair Godiva did ordain
All stay indoors till she pass by;
To kiss the rod one would be fain
If one but knew the reason why!

One might be bold and send a line
And put the question plump and plain,
Just what has been the crime? and sign
And take the risk of her disdain:
One might get one's recall again—
It would be worth one's while to try—
At least, it would assuage the pain
If one but knew the reason why!

And so, at risk of your disdain,
I write to say with many a sigh
That it would really ease one's pain
If one but knew the reason why!

"Keith, my boy," he said to himself as he folded it up and placed it in an envelope addressed to Miss Colquhoun, "I'm afraid you're in a bad way to be writing verse to a lady at your time of life. It might be all right in a boy of twenty; but at twenty-nine, it's a very grave and serious matter. However here goes!"

He dispatched the letter by a bell-boy with instructions to wait for an answer. It was not very long in coming. The lady said she would be down to lunch at one o'clock, the boy said; and he was roundly astonished at the generosity of his tip.

CHAPTER XXV

A lovely ladie rode him faire beside.

SPENSER.

"I was wondering if you would be good enough to give me an answer to my note of this morning," said Keith that afternoon to Marjorie as they rode slowly along past the buffalo enclosure and the Yacht Club quarters in Stanley Park.

They had lunched together without a word having been said about his verses or the circumstances that evoked them. Both had felt that an explanation of some kind was inevitable. The girl desired to put it off as long as possible, while Keith did not want to ask for it in the dining-room where there were so many eyes around them. After lunch, they had gone down to the Horse Show Building where Puck, the bay pony, had been examined and duly approved by Keith before being saddled. Mr. Callaghan had also produced a fine black thoroughbred called "the Cid" on which Keith was now mounted.

"I see that Horace was not the only farmer poet," she temporised, patting the glossy neck of the little horse.

"Horace, at least, I fancy was too much the courtier, too much the man of the world, to be always putting his foot in it like me."

She shot a fleeting, roguish glance at him from under her long eyelashes.

"Maybe he was better tempered," she hazarded.

"He was only a sort of gentleman farmer," said Keith

in deprecation; "and didn't have anything to try his temper. Now, if he had had to do some land-clearing, he might have been bad-tempered too. He never had to dig out a cedar stump or wrestle with vine-maple; or he wouldn't have written so philosophically."

"It seems to me that I remember one of the odes where he describes how he narrowly escaped being killed by a tree falling on top of him," she demurred.

"Aha!" said Keith to himself, "so she knows Horace as well as that, does she? I'm afraid, Mrs. Dalrymple, we shall have to throw aside your housekeeper's daughter hypothesis and seek for something more in keeping with the phenomena. Indeed, I discarded it long ago I'm afraid."

"I see you know your Horace," he said aloud; "but if you know him so intimately, you will remember that he wasn't very good tempered over it—in fact, he cursed the tree and the man that planted it as well. However, we're getting away from the question I'm afraid."

She did not speak, but her fingers were busy plaiting the mane of her horse who was arching his neck proudly as if pleased at the honour.

"You know it has often appeared to me," Keith went on reflectively, "that the average chap like myself, when he presumes to enjoy the companionship of the other sex, amid their finer perceptions and quicker intuitions, is just like a frolicsome young St. Bernard in a drawing-room full of china and costly bric-à-brac. He means well, but he does not realise the damage and destruction he is doing."

"I fear you are speaking in irony," she said, still keeping her eyes turned down.

"Not at all; I am speaking in earnest," he affirmed. "Last night we were getting on splendidly and I thought

that my past blunders had been forgiven; and then I said something and, in a moment, you were as distant as the poles. Again, on the train you would scarcely speak to me at all."

"I was unpardonably rude," she confessed; "and I was sorry afterwards. We are creatures of impulse, you know, and we do things without thinking; later we suffer agonies of remorse."

"Yes, but there was some reason behind the impulse; if one but knew the reason why," he quoted. "The accused—or I should say the convicted, I suppose, in this case—has a right to know the nature of the charge against him."

"I have apologised," she said and there was a slight tremor in her voice: "surely that is sufficient. You pay too much attention to a silly girl's whims and fancies. We are losing all the beauty of this lovely scenery."

"I'm sorry to be so obstinate," he persisted; "but if there is any misapprehension in your mind, I should like to clear it up. Yesterday in the train, now, just what made you snub me so unmercifully when I was trying to be as civil as I could?"

"Well, if you will have it," she said, turning round to look at him, "I was angry because you thrashed Dicky."

Keith looked at her in astonishment.

"Because I thrashed Dicky!" he repeated wonderingly, and then he laughed softly. There was no sign in his manner of the confusion which she had dreaded, yet expected to see. "Who told you that I thrashed Dicky?" he asked. "Not the boy himself, I'm sure."

"Oh no, not Dicky, of course," she hastened to say; "but some one saw it and told me. It was in confidence, you see."

"And so I was to be sent to Coventry without the

chance to say a word in my defence," he complained. "Now was that fair play, do you think?"

"It did not seem to me that there could be any defence," she returned; but her tone had a shade of indecision. The thought was borne in upon her that perhaps there was some mistake; and it made her cold with apprehension.

"And to think that in certain of the United States they have the ladies sitting on the Jury!" he cried in mock despair. "Dick, the injured party himself, did not bear any malice, did he?"

"Before, he used to talk about you all the time," she replied; "and since that, he's never mentioned your name to me once."

"Ah well, there was a reason for that," said Keith; "but we're still as friendly as ever. But why in all the world," he went on with a puzzled air, "why should I, of all people, thrash Dicky?"

"I—I thought that you had been punishing him for having given you away," she stammered painfully, "for having let it out that—that his mother had asked you to take me that night. I couldn't think of any other reason you could have."

"But it was Forrest Eaton that gave Dicky the beating," he said taking pity on her distress and hastening to turn the subject into a channel that would be less painful to her. "The young bully set upon him down by the creek—at least he began to tease poor Dicky who was a bit down in the mouth anyway—and the youngster started to go for him. Forrest, however, managed to get Dicky down and then hammered him until Cæsar came along and scared him off."

"Oh, what a shame!" said Marjorie forgetting her own discomfiture in her indignation. "Then he was lying to me! It was he that blamed it upon you. I hated to be-

lieve it; I ought to have known you better," she concluded contritely, "but I never imagined the boy would tell a lie about it."

"'Give a dog a bad name!' you know," Keith quoted with a smile. "Never mind, though; next time I hope that you will know me better. I have plenty of faults, but I really think that vindictiveness is not one of them."

"You are certainly proving it now," she said humbly.

She was thinking of the rudeness he had borne from her, the snubs and the slights; and through them all he had been invariably courteous and forbearing. She hated to contemplate what he must have thought of her. Now under this culminating insult it was evident that he bore her no malice. She felt profoundly grateful that he had passed it over so lightly.

"I can only say how sorry I am," she said at last, "and offer to do penance. I am on my knees before you."

"Do you submit yourself unreservedly for sentence?" he asked smiling.

"Unreservedly," she answered.

"But before I pronounce it, I must know whether this was all that you had against me or was there anything else," he pressed.

"There was nothing else," she assured him. "Of course, when I came to my sober senses, I could not blame you for your kindness in taking me to the dance. It was not your fault that you were asked to do so; and it was only my pride that made me so rude over the matter."

She thought of what Miss Arbuthnot had told her, but she now put no faith in that young lady's words. She felt that they would prove false; just as this other thing had turned out to be a mistake.

"My sentence is this, then," said Keith, "that while

you are in town, you must permit me to show you some of the beauty spots; and when you go back to Portlake, you will be able to tell Dick all about it."

"Shall we try a gallop?" suggested Marjorie.

CHAPTER XXVI

By the far Western sea, near the bend of the bay,
Where the hush of the wild meets the song of the spray,
In nature's rich vestments an Eden arrayed,
Sanctuary mine, sweet Stanley Glade.

CAPT. CHARLES EDDIE.

She sleeps between the mountains and the sea,
In that great Abbey of the setting sun;
A princess, poet, woman—three in one;
And fine in every measure of the three.

WILSON MACDONALD.

MARJORIE'S heart felt as if a weight had been lifted from it by Keith's explanation and in the balmy air of the summer afternoon with the sea and the mountains all around and Puck full of spirit and fire beneath her, she prepared to enjoy the afternoon to the full.

It was true that her circumstances were such as might well cause her anxiety, had she been one of those people that are always ready to meet trouble half-way. She lay under suspicion of the police and was liable to be arrested at any time should the detectives repent of their clemency; and although conscious of her own innocence she knew that she would be released again, still the possibility was not pleasant to contemplate. To appeal to her people for help in such an extremity, after the way in which she had left them, she felt, would be an alternative almost as humiliating as arrest.

In spite of this possibility, however, that lay at the back of her consciousness, she did not allow herself to be cast down. Notwithstanding her sheltered upbringing she

had developed somehow or other a character of considerable self-reliance and strength, which with her coming to Canada had been further developed by her experiences and the way she had met them. For all her repose of manner, she was full of the glorious vitality of youth; and perhaps the knowledge of peril just past or still imminent added a zest and a keenness to the sense of adventure that thrilled her piquantly to-day.

"This is glorious," she said exultingly. "You must be a proper cicerone and show me everything of interest. You must point out to me all the wonders and the beauty-spots of this Stanley Park that I have heard so much about," she said looking around at Keith.

They had reined up their horses at Brockton Point on the stone rampart above the lighthouse to enjoy the wonderful view. To the left lay the Narrows through which a tug was coming on the flood tide with a boom of logs in tow; straight ahead the North Vancouver shore with the mountains still snow-capped above; and to the right, the Inlet stretching away in the distance, its shores lined with infant industries and its waters dotted with craft of all descriptions.

"That's just what I mustn't do," said Keith smiling. "I don't want to spoil it for you; I want the wonder of it just to sink into you without the disillusionising influence of the guide-book."

"But I wouldn't consider you a guide-book," she protested. "You could be as poetical as you pleased."

"Let me feed you with fancy and legend, then, rather than facts and figures and I don't mind," he bargained.

"Fancy, by all means," she agreed; "but of legend, I thought that in this new country there was none. How can you have legend in a howling wilderness? In Canada, you have the charm of the new and the unknown, as you

were saying last night; but of folklore and historic association—all the pot-pourri of human strifes and loves and sorrows accumulated through the centuries—you have nothing. In my country, for instance, the borderland of Scotland, there is not a mile but is famous for some battle, or foray, or some noted person, dead and gone."

"Very true," said Keith; "and you owe it largely to your Walter Scott, who had the foresight to preserve the old ballads and tales before they were forgotten. You forget that this country has had its people, albeit scanty enough in numbers, and they had their loves and strifes, too."

"Oh, yes, of course, there were the Indians," said Marjorie a trifle contemptuously; "but I don't suppose that you have much in the way of legend from them. I always understood that in the West they are so much inferior to the Eastern tribes."

"That might be to a certain extent. It is to a daughter of one of these Eastern tribes that we owe the preservation of our legends here—I mean Pauline Johnson."

"I have heard her spoken of as an Indian poetess but that is all I know of her."

"Well, she had done for us here what Walter Scott did for the Borders, and we owe her our eternal gratitude. One of the legends she preserved centres about this very spot on which we stand."

He saw she was interested and so he went on to relate it.

"One of the vices that was unknown to the Indian before he was contaminated by the advent of the white man was that of avarice, she tells us. In the first gold rush, many of the Indians went as guides with the miners and one came back, whose heart had been tainted with the white man's passion, the lust for riches. He was mi-

serly, selfish and cruel, and the Sagalie Tyee, the Indians' god, turned him into a two-headed sea-serpent. One head of it rested here on this very bluff and the other away across there on the shore below the Indian Mission, that row of little white houses with the church in the centre. Typifying greed, it lay helpless and inert, blocking and befouling the whole Inlet.

"Now the Sagalie Tyee had ordained that whoever could pierce the monster's heart would conquer the disease of greed among the people. The great chiefs and the medicine men had done their best to banish the scourge but without avail. At last, a boy of sixteen who was noted for his bravery and unselfishness, essayed the task of piercing the monster's heart. Four days he swam around searching to find the vital part and none of his people saw him; but on the fifth, he was observed, just at daybreak, on this very bluff stretching his young arms out to greet the sun before diving headlong into the sea. This was repeated every morning for four years before he was able to find and pierce the monster's heart.

"What an interesting story," said Marjorie when he had finished. "It reminds one somewhat of the monster Grendel in the Old Anglo-Saxon epic, the 'Beowulf.' And are there any more beautiful tales like that?" she asked.

"Did you see that little island on the right we have just passed?" he said. "The Indians call it 'The Island of Dead Men,' though some have called it 'The Isle of Dreams.' Pauline Johnson tells us that it has always been a place of strife, and battles innumerable have been waged about it. It takes its name from one great conflict, however, in which we are told the men of the south managed to capture all the wives and children and old men of the northern tribes when the braves were away. These they threatened to kill unless the same number of young

braves would give themselves up. It was a great act of sacrifice but it was done; and two hundred of their finest warriors cheerfully laid down their lives for their loved ones. The legend relates, however, that the morning after they had been slaughtered, their enemies found the spot on which they had died covered with flaming fire-flowers, and they were so terrified that they fled from the island and left the coast never to return."

"Why, it is as fine as some of the old Greek tales, is it not? No wonder you feel grateful to Pauline Johnson," said Marjorie as they rode on again.

"I wonder how you are enjoying your office as deputy policeman," she remarked with a mischievous smile as they breathed the horses after a mile or so of hard galloping. "Suppose that I were to try to run away from you now, wouldn't it be a fine sensation for any one that saw us."

"I am enjoying it thoroughly," said Keith; "so I hope you won't try to run away. I hope that I'm not obnoxious enough to drive you to such a desperate alternative."

"One never can tell," and she shook her head with a touch of seriousness. "It would not be the first time that I had run away, you know."

"So appearances would indicate," Keith remarked with as matter-of-fact an air as he could assume. He was aware that he was on delicate ground and it behooved him to walk carefully. He felt, rather than saw, that she glanced at him quickly but he kept his eyes resolutely on the scenery ahead of him.

"What appearances, for instance?" she asked with a touch of hauteur.

Keith laughed and straightened out a stray strand of his horse's mane before replying.

"When Cinderella becomes herself the fairy godmother,

and carries a king's ransom in her handbag, it is a sure sign that she is not what she seems; and if one has not run away, why should one hide who are one's relatives. It is true that relatives are often a trial and a cross; but they are not to be altogether cast off except for the weightiest reasons."

"But I might not have any relatives," she protested.

He shook his head and turned himself sideways in the saddle so as to enjoy a look at her. She turned her eyes to face him but they fell under his admiring gaze and a rich colour crept into her cheeks.

"People, as charming as you, are bound to have relatives," he asserted. "If Providence had started them out without any, they could never get through their teens without being adopted."

"You have never had the curiosity to ask who mine were then," she remarked with a faint note of reproach in her voice and still her eyes were turned down on the pony's mane.

"When one is a daughter of the stars, one's earthly relatives are of small consequence," he replied. "You are remote enough from me now with such heavenly connections; and why should I court further discouragement by risking the discovery of more aristocratic ones on earth?"

"Have you no qualms about your two thousand dollars, at least?" she questioned; and he had her eyes for a moment.

"If you were to run away from me," he averred and his heart thumped against his ribs in a manner that astonished him; "it would not be the money that would cause me the greatest grief."

"What would it be then?" she asked; and her long lashes still swept her cheek.

"Why, the loss of my prisoner, of course, and of my job," he said. "I only wish it were a permanent one," he added fervently.

"Your friend has not arrived yet?" she asked changing the subject with a disconcerting suddenness.

Keith gasped inwardly but outwardly he maintained his composure.

"No," he said; "there are no signs of her. She should have been here last night; but she is with friends and I suppose has to be guided by their wishes. However, I am not in any hurry to see her."

Two motors shrieking with their sirens came up behind them and Keith had to rein his horse to the rear; so the subject was allowed to drop. They had just reached the top of the long hill going up to Observation Point and as they rode up on the crest and looked over the bluff, Marjorie could not repress a cry of admiration.

They were looking out over English Bay from a height of about two hundred and fifty feet above the water. Across the mouth of the Narrows lay the little suburbs of Hollyburn and Dundarave, the houses and the tents along the shore standing out clear in the afternoon sunlight.

"This has been called the Sunset Doorway of the Dominion," said Keith. "I have seen the Golden Gate at San Francisco and it is no more beautiful. The best time to come here though is in the early morning or just at sunset. In the morning everything is so fresh and clear; and in the evening, the tints on the sea and the mountains are so beautiful and there is usually a restful hush upon the whole scene."

"How clearly one hears the dash of the waves on the rocks below," said Marjorie after a space of speechless gazing at the scene before them.

They tied the horses to the rustic fence and climbed

down a rough path past the quaint cottage, where the watchman lives, until they were halfway down the pine-covered promontory that guards the Narrows. Just as they got there, a large steamer with lines like a yacht swept majestically out beneath them; and they could hear the engine bell ringing as, having passed the Narrows safely, the signal was given for full speed.

"That is the 'Empress of Japan' on her way to the Orient," said Keith. "She looks small when you get above her like this; but she is big enough when you are aboard of her."

They climbed up again, and, having mounted, rode on. Soon they met a merry company of school-girls on horseback with their riding-master making the air glad with their fresh young voices ringing out above the clatter of hoofs as they trotted gaily along. The road had again left the shore and cut in through the woods, their beautiful greens varied with the white of the wild cherry and the dogwood and the pink of the salmon-berry. They passed the huge hollow stump with the little rustic hut behind it and the photographer in waiting, where so many princes and other famous people, that have visited the Park, have been photographed.

"The wildness makes the greatest part of its charm, doesn't it?" said Marjorie, pointing to the underbrush so thick as to be almost impenetrable.

"Just a bit of the 'forest primeval,' but made accessible by roads," said Keith; "and set down at the edge of a city. There are places that have never been penetrated, by white men, at least. Some years ago it was found that a trapper had been plying his trade all unknown to the Park keepers for months. He had his hut and his bed and was making a fine catch of furs from the wild animals.

"The Indians have a legend, which Pauline Johnson relates, that somewhere in one of the deepest recesses of the Park there is an evil influence that brings to destruction any one that comes within the radius of its power. The poet calls it the Lure of Stanley Park. It is in the form of a white stone into which the soul of a witch-woman who had long afflicted the people, was turned by the Sagalie Tyee. Whoever wanders within its evil spell is doomed. His will-power is broken and his wits forsake him so that he walks in a circle around the stone and is never able to break away. The Indians believe that, even after death, your soul will continue to circle forever and that you are forever prevented from going to the Happy Hunting Grounds."

"What a gruesome legend!" said Marjorie. "It reminds one of the stories that are told of the man-catching trees in Borneo. And do the Indians still believe in this evil spirit?" she asked.

"According to Pauline Johnson," Keith replied, "they cannot be got to enter those parts of the Park where the Lure is supposed to be hidden for fear of the dreadful consequences. However, the legend has a more pleasing side to it for we are told that when the 'Four Men' who carry out the decrees of the Sagalie Tyee had transformed the witch-woman into the stone, they felt the necessity of something that would counteract her evil influence. So, they took several of the most generous and merciful of all the men in the country and changed them into trees which they placed not far from the resting-place of the stone. These are known as the Cathedral Trees. To-morrow, perhaps, we can pay them a visit; but I suppose you would not want to hunt for the Lure."

"Hardly, I think," she replied with a faint shudder.

"There are enough lures around without hunting for them."

"Now we come to the grave of Pauline Johnson," and Keith drew rein as they came to a road leading down to the right. Just at the fork, there was a break in the underwoods and within was a rustic enclosure with a large stone inside of it. Some one had recently placed a bouquet of flowers upon it.

"Oh, she was buried here then?" said Marjorie.

"Yes, according to her own wish," he replied. "Siwash Rock is not far away. You can read the story about it in the 'Legends.'"

"What a fitting thing it seems that she should lie here in this lovely spot in the Park that she must have loved so much. Just as beautifully fitting as that Stevenson should be laid by his faithful islanders on the lonely mountain-top in Samoa."

"Yes, indeed," said Keith musingly; "even in what is so often called a materialistic age, such graves mean much to the world."

They had dismounted and led their horses across the foot walk and through a narrow path to a little rustic summer-house set on the bluff that is known as Ferguson's Point where one can see Siwash Rock to the right. It is a charmingly secluded spot, sheltered by thick hedges around it on the cliff edge and a clump of alders behind; and one can gaze out seaward and hear the sough of the winds and the washing of the spray down below. Here, too, one gets the real sharp, salt tang of the sea. The horses champed their bits and nibbled at the herbage, with alacrity; while their riders sat down on the rude seat.

"This is a favourite nook of mine," said Keith, "whenever I am down here. One can sit and read a book undisturbed by the crowd."

"You have chosen well," she replied; "it is a Paradise."

"It is a place where one might well forget the world and all its shams and hollownesses," he went on. "You challenged me a while ago to ask you who your people were and why you left them."

"Hardly challenged, I think; but I did think that you had a right to be curious as to the story of my life—as they say in the melodramas—since your pocket was so deeply engaged. However, we are often told that it is only women who are curious."

She was looking out to sea but she turned to smile at him.

"Well, I would not take your challenge or your invitation," he said, and there was a curious tightness at his throat, "because I was afraid you might think that I was prying or suspicious. My position, at present, is a peculiar one and there is something that I would say if it were not that I feel I have not the right to speak. I want you to remember this whatever may happen."

His heart was beating fast with the stress of his emotion. He felt that he loved her, but to tell her now in the strange rôle that fortune had given him to play towards her would be to take advantage of her extremity. When she returned to Portlake, then would be the time, but now his lips were sealed.

"I will remember," she said seriously, and her eyes would not meet his. She rose to her feet. "But we must be getting on, I think," she added and her tone seemed to him to express reproof. Perhaps, though—he could not be sure—there might have been a touch of something else.

CHAPTER XXVII

Underneath my smiling face,
Bitter heartaches lie;
She I love has left the place
Nor has said "good-bye":
Other bright eyes at the feast
Linger on me kindly;
But they lure me not the least
Since I love her blindly.

ANON.

IT was quarter past six that evening when Marjorie and Keith entered the dining room and took their own little table at the far end of the room.

Marjorie had had a good rest after the ride and was feeling well content although a little stiff with the unaccustomed exercise. The afternoon had proved very enjoyable and most of the unpleasantness of her unfortunate predicament as a suspect had passed out of her mind. It was only a question of a day or two more until the whole thing would be satisfactorily cleared up; and if the days passed as pleasantly as had the afternoon and the evening before, the inconvenience of her enforced stay in town would have its compensations.

True, she felt a shade of uneasiness as to the propriety of her dining in public with a young man whom she knew but slightly and that, not once, but regularly; but she did not very well see how she could avoid it without apparent ungraciousness to one who had put himself at some risk to do her a service. The only alternative would be to take her meals in her room; and to do this she felt would only add additional awkwardness to a situation that

was difficult enough as it was. The manager, Mr. Graham, at least, was cognisant of how matters stood and she was, in a measure, under his protection. The sensible course, she felt, was to make a virtue of necessity and to be thankful that it was not London, and that there was nobody around who knew her, to care what she did. She felt that she had good reason to be thankful she was not in gaol, which would at least have been far more terrible to her, whether or not it would have been more dreadful in the eyes of Mrs. Grundy.

Keith, himself, be it said, had not been without some twinges of conscience as to whether he had a right to run the risk of compromising the girl by a too conspicuous attendance upon her. However, he had quickly stifled them. Had she expressed any reluctance or hesitation on the score of propriety, he would have acquiesced without a word; but her non-appearance at breakfast, he had felt, had been caused by a little misunderstanding and nothing more, which it was due to himself to put right.

He was in love with her and that was sufficient justification; but, even were that wanting, he said to himself, was she not in a way, if not the captive of his bow and spear, at least the hostage for his good money. The loss of two thousand dollars would mean serious inconvenience to him at this time; and he had no right, he told himself, to take any chances. Not that he had really any doubt as to the safety of it; but anyway, he had the right to take precautions.

There was a delightful piquancy in the situation. She was wearing the same gown of pink that she had worn the night before but around her neck she had clasped the sunburst of diamonds and sapphires which she had offered to the pawnbrokers. The rich jewels showing to advantage against her white throat added a touch of splendour to her

otherwise simple costume. As Keith sat opposite her, captive to the spell of her charm, watching the sparkle of her eyes and listening to the soft, liquid accents of her voice, he hugged himself in gratulation.

"The gods have been good to you, my boy," he was thinking; "you're in luck for once. Five whole days, at least, it should be before Inspector Brown can get his reply from the East and it's more likely, six or seven. Meantime, though, you're muzzled. You mustn't make love to her until this thing is cleared up; it wouldn't be playing the game. But adorable as she is, how you are to keep from it, I don't know. It will be a hard job."

"A penny for your thoughts," she was saying.

"A penny!" he exclaimed in scorn. "They are worth untold gold."

"To you, maybe," she said, "but not to me, I fear. I doubt you rate them too high," and her nose was tipped ever so slightly in the air.

"To myself, of course, I meant," he hastened to reply; "and I would never sell them. But thoughts, like happiness, are not the less enjoyed for being shared. To bring them to concrete form and make them presentable for inspection,"—and he lowered his voice to a confidential tone —"I was thinking that to-night we can get down to English Bay in good time for the best of the sunset and after that there will be the moon. I was thinking, may it please your majesty, of:

'We two dreaming the dusk away,
Beneath the drift of a twilight grey—
Beneath the drowse of an ending day
And the curve of a golden moon.'

"I was thinking," he went on, "of the charming picture that a certain person makes, framed in the bow of a

canoe with the sunset glint in her golden hair, the sunset glow on her cheek kissed by the evening breeze. This will never do, though," he reflected; "if I start at such a pace I shall never be able to stop."

She was saved from answering by the appearance of the waiter with the soup. At the same moment Keith's attention was drawn to a party of four that had just entered and were being ushered by the head-waiter down the room. A stout, elderly lady of imposing stature led the way, followed by a young one and two men walking side by side followed in their wake. In the young lady, he recognised Patricia Devereux.

"Oh, bother!" he exclaimed in a voice eloquent of dismay. "There is my friend coming in. I had forgotten. They told me at the office that the train was expected; it was a good many hours late because of slides or something."

Marjorie followed his gaze and she, too, gave a start of dismay; but Keith, absorbed in his own annoyance, did not notice it. The party had been placed at a table on the other side of the room just opposite them; and Keith saw that as soon as they had a chance to look round, Patricia was bound to see him.

"I suppose I had better go over and speak to them for a moment," he said; "if you will excuse me. I shall not be long."

She gave her assent and he rose and went over to the new-comers. Patricia gave a slight exclamation of pleased surprise when she saw him and shook hands, smiling up at him very graciously. She was one who never lost her poise whatever happened as Keith had often had occasion to remark.

"This is my friend, Mr. Leicester, Lady Angleside and Lord Angleside and Mr. Trevelyan," she said.

"I looked for you yesterday," said Keith after he had made his acknowledgments.

"Oh, Lady Angleside was not very well in Winnipeg and we waited over," Patricia explained; "I should have let you know if I had known where to wire you."

"Yes, I'm sure," said Lady Angleside; "she was most distressed about it and so was I. But what could one do? You see these trains are such a trial and I felt I positively could not go any further without a rest. Perhaps, if you have not finished your meal, the waiter would set a chair for you with us," she suggested graciously. "I'm sure Miss Devereux and you will have a great deal to say to each other," and she smiled with some meaning.

"I thank you very much, I'm sure," stammered Keith; "but the fact is, I am dining with a friend to-night. However, no doubt, I shall see you later. You will excuse me for the present," and with a bow that included all the party, he escaped back to his table again, only to find that it was vacant and his partner of a moment ago had disappeared.

He could scarcely believe his eyes; but there were the same two plates of soup almost untasted. The waiter was not about, so there was no information to be got from him. For a moment he stood confounded, conscious of the eyes of Patricia and her friends boring into his back. Then he sat down. He was relieved by the approach of the head-waiter.

"The young lady told me to tell you that she had a headache and begged that you would excuse her, sir," he said. "She said she was going to her room."

"Then, perhaps, you would be good enough to set a chair for me with my friends over there," said Keith rather bewildered but anxious to carry the matter off as well as

possible. He could not understand Marjorie's disappearance; but he might as well make the best of it.

"My friend has gone off," he said, returning with some feeling of embarrassment to Patricia and her party; "and if you don't mind I shall be glad to accept your invitation." He thought it very likely that they would not have noticed who was with him and was thankful that "friend" had a common gender.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Her smile no longer warms his heart,
Her eyes can win no answering glow:
The tongue once urged a lover's part,
Now falters painfully and slow.

ANON.

"You are looking well, Patricia," said Keith, as they sat in the lounge room after dinner, the others of the party having retired, Lady Angleside to her room and the two men to take a stroll.

Keith was in no frame of mind to enjoy a tête-à-tête with his former fiancée but there seemed to be no way of avoiding it. There were times, he felt, when the exigencies of social custom become maddening; and this was certainly one of them. He had been prepared for a probable awkwardness when Patricia appeared but for nothing so unpleasant as this. What could have caused Marjorie to act as she had, he was at a loss to guess; and he would have given anything for half an hour of quietness with his pipe to think it over. Instead he had to make himself agreeable to his former flame and his heart was not in the task. To a sensitive man it could hardly be free from some measure of embarrassment and restraint; and in Keith's case, the preoccupation of his mind could not fail to increase this feeling.

"I am glad you do not find me much changed," she said. "You are looking splendid, and the touch of tan is quite becoming. Do you do much work yourself or do you just oversee?"

"I am afraid that I do most of it myself," he replied laughing. "My one man knows as much if not more about it than I do, so we just work side by side. Bush-farming, I am afraid, is not the thing for a gentleman farmer."

"I should so much like to see your place and the kind of life you lead on it. I suppose you have somebody to cook for you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Dalrymple looks after all my housekeeping arrangements and a very capable soul she is. We get along splendidly," he replied.

Patricia at the ranch was a contingency that had never before entered his head and he was at a loss to know what answer to make to her expression of a desire to see it. The wish might be a mere matter of politeness; or it might have behind it the desire for a resumption of their former relationship. He hastened to lead the conversation into a less dangerous channel.

"You are fortunate to get such pleasant travelling companions," he continued. "Did they just come out to see the country? You said in your letter that you were going through to Australia."

She looked at him a little coldly for a second, as if not quite pleased at the change in the conversation.

"Yes, they are nice people," she replied. "They are out here on rather a peculiar mission. I only wish that they were going with me all the way. It will seem rather dreary travelling alone after being with them. I rather dread the long voyage to Sydney all by myself."

"Oh, but there are always plenty of pleasant people travelling on those boats," said Keith cheerfully; "and you were always very popular. What have you been doing with yourself since I saw you last?"

"The same old round, I suppose. London in the season and the Highlands in the summer with an occasional trip

on the Continent. I can afford such luxuries now, you see. I suppose you heard about my good fortune?"

"No," said Keith; "what was that?"

"Oh, I thought that you had heard. My Aunt Honoria died and left me all she had—quite a large sum for me. It was always expected it would go to my cousin, Jim Eldridge; but it appeared that he had been rather neglectful of her of late—had taken too much for granted—and so she cut him out of her will and put me in instead."

"I am awfully glad," said Keith heartily. "It's the best news I've heard for a long time."

"If this had happened three years ago, it might have made things different for us," she said after a slight pause. Her eyes were turned down and the fingers of her left hand played nervously on the upholstered arm of her chair. There were two rings on it but the engagement finger was bare.

"What difference would that have made?" asked Keith. His manner was cold and outwardly he was calm; but he could not help feeling nervous. Any going back upon their old relations was distasteful to him; but he had hoped that she would have the good taste to forbear from it.

"Why, there would have been no need of our parting, would there?" she said in a tone slightly reproachful. "I knew that I was not cut out for a poor man's wife; and it was as much for your sake as my own that I thought we should break it off when your uncle married again. I felt I was being cruel only to be kind;" and her voice betrayed a tremor that Keith remembered from of old.

"Do not let us go back on it," he said with some constraint, feeling that it was impossible for him to respond with any approach to the old tenderness. "Why should we rake up the past? It hit me pretty hard at the

time; but I have become quite reconciled. No doubt, you did it for the best, and I'm sure I bear no malice. As we grow older we look upon life more philosophically, you know;" and he smiled with an air of cheerfulness although in truth his feelings were gloomy enough as he thought of the way he had planned to spend the evening.

"Well, I am glad to hear it I am sure," she said; "for my conscience has pricked me, I must confess, on your account. It is a relief to know that there was no serious damage done. And now," she continued in a different tone, "I shall have to be getting ready to go out with Mr. Trevelyan. I promised to go with him in half an hour to see the town. Poor fellow, he has had rather an unfortunate love affair, though it may turn out all right yet."

"He did not appear to be much cast down at dinner time," remarked Keith with a smile. "Indeed it seemed to me that you and he must have been hitting it off very well together."

"He was engaged to his father's ward, a Miss Colquhoun, who was very wealthy in her own right," Patricia went on, ignoring Keith's little thrust. "They were brought up together, a sort of boy and girl attachment, although they say that all the ardour was on his side. However, the engagement was announced and a date set for the wedding when all at once, she disappeared. She left a note saying that she was going and that they need not look for her. This was several months ago. At first, they could not find any trace of her whereabouts but, at last, they discovered that she had come out here and was staying with her old nurse near a place called Portlake. It must be somewhere near you, I fancy."

Keith's thoughts were in a whirl during Patricia's revelation but he managed by a strong effort of will to conceal his emotion. Here, then, was the solution of the

mystery and the explanation of Marjorie's sudden flight. His heart sank as he realised the difference that it would make to his own chances with her; but he had no time to weigh this now. Patricia was looking at him, waiting for a reply.

"Portlake," he stammered, "why—why, yes, that is quite close to me."

"Well, how strange! Perhaps, you may have seen her," said Patricia eagerly. "Mrs. Bolton is her old nurse's name."

Just at this moment a bell-boy entered the room and in loud tones cried out: "Call for Mr. Leicester, please." Keith could have fallen on his neck and embraced him. Excusing himself hastily he hurried away, leaving Patricia with her curiosity unsatisfied and somewhat annoyed at his haste.

"His manners have not improved, I'm afraid," she reflected, with a curl of her lip. "Well, at least, I know how I stand in that quarter and he certainly left me no room for doubt. There is something to be said for straightforwardness after all; and Keith was never one to say other than he felt. It is clear that he wants no more of me."

Keith meanwhile had gone to the telephone booth.

A voice with a rich, Irish brogue came over the line.

"Is that Mr. Leicester, sir? Well, this is Mr. Callaghan speaking to you. I must apologise for disturbing you but I thought maybe you wouldn't mind. You see, Miss Colquhoun came and got her horse about half an hour ago an' said she was to stay the night with some friends and might not be back for a week or so. She said would I mind her taking the horse before she had paid the balance due on it as she would let me have it soon.

"Well, sir, you see, I let her have it and that was all right and I told the boys to saddle it for her. But it

appears that as she was riding down the street, she met one of the grooms and not knowing he belonged to the stable, she asked him the way to Portlake. Well, sir, when he told me that, I felt a bit worried as I wouldn't like to think of her riding all that way to-night; for it would be a pretty lonesome road. I just thought that maybe you would know if there was anybody with her an' if it would be all right."

Keith's heart gave a leap. So she had fled from the hotel and was on her way back to Portlake with the little horse.

"She must have been badly scared to have broken her parole, too," he reflected. "Oh, I expect that it is all right, Mr. Callaghan," he said, "but I am obliged to you for letting me know. Probably she didn't realise how far it is up there. She is living with friends and I know she was expecting to return soon."

There was no use in letting Callaghan get excited about it, he thought.

He looked at his watch and saw that it was half past eight which meant that Marjorie had had an hour and a half of start ahead of him. Calling the boy, he tipped him and told him to go to the lounge room and tell Patricia that he had been called on very important business and he hoped that she would excuse him. Five minutes later, he was speeding down Hastings Street in a Packard car and the chauffeur had instructions that he was to make all the speed possible without coming to grief.

CHAPTER XXIX

She's slippit awa' frae yon high tower
An' left her lad behind:
O could I but win my ain wee bower
An' my ain auld nurse sae kind!

OLD BALLAD.

WHEN Marjorie saw Lord and Lady Angleside and their son walking down the dining room towards her, she almost fainted with surprise and mortification. That they should find her at all would be bad enough but that they should find her staying alone in a hotel and dining in the company of a young man, would be nothing short of a catastrophe.

Her Aunt Sophronia, as she had always called Lady Angleside ever since as a girl of twelve she had made her home with them, was a typical example of the British matron in her strictness with regard to the proprieties, and the girl had been brought up with the most rigid respect for them. She had been taught that the tender flower of girlhood was a hot-house growth that would inevitably wilt if once withdrawn from the protecting shade of the chaperon; and all the dreadful consequences that had been carefully pointed out to her in times past, now forced themselves upon her memory at the sight of the familiar face.

Lady Angleside had always tried to be kind but had never really won the affections of the girl. She was a woman of a worldly nature and social success had been the end and aim of her existence; but her efforts to inspire her

husband's ward with the same ideals had been totally unavailing. A marriage with her own son would provide the girl with a title and at the same time would be a satisfactory means of lifting the mortgages with which the Angleside estates were heavily dipped. The young couple were brought up to look forward to this as their manifest destiny; and as they were both fond of each other in a boy and girl fashion, no serious opposition had ever been made to it until the time drew near when Lady Angleside thought that it ought to be consummated.

In spite of the girl's refusal to consent, she had the engagement announced, feeling sure that by this heroic means her opposition would be swept away. Marjorie, however, still remained firm and refused to accept congratulations or to acquiesce in her aunt's *tour de force;* and she was punished by the whole family sending her to Coventry. The father and son being under Lady Angleside's thumb, had to join in the petty persecution; although to tell the truth, neither of them did it with any degree of willingness. To a girl of Marjorie's sensitive nature, the punishment became almost unbearable and, fearing the pressure might become too strong for her, she conceived the idea of taking refuge with Mrs. Bolton, with the result we have seen.

So, it was no wonder that as soon as Keith had left her to cross over to greet his friend, and she saw that there was a chance of escape, she did not fail to take advantage of it. To find that his friend was of her guardian's party was a further complication to add to her perplexity and made her the more anxious that she should not be discovered.

When she had reached the door, she luckily thought of sending a message to Keith by the head-waiter explaining her absence; and then she hastened to her room. Her one

idea was to get back to Portlake and Mrs. Bolton. To stay in the hotel was impossible. There was no train that she could take so late in the day and the only way that she could think of was to ride the horse she had purchased for Dick. She might have hired a motor but she remembered Inspector Brown; and she feared that she might be arrested if seen arranging for a car. She did not know either if she had enough money to pay for the trip. At the stable she was known and she thought that she could prevail upon Mr. Callaghan's good-nature to let her have the horse without paying what was due on it.

With regard to her obligation to Keith to remain, she felt that she would have to break her parole; but, under the circumstances she felt that he would not have held her to it. It was not likely that when the mistake was found out, which must be within a day or two at most, his money would be in any danger; and in any case, as her twenty-first birthday was close at hand when she would come into her inheritance, she would have ample funds from which to repay him. She hated to give him reason to think ill of her; but she felt that the extremity was so great that she must take the risk. How she was to escape from the hotel without being seen by the bell-boy who was supposed to keep an eye upon her she was unable to see; but, after weighing the pros and cons, she decided to risk it and take the chance of the boy's being away from his post. She had put on her riding costume and even if he saw her, he might think that she was just going for a ride and that it was not worth while reporting to the manager.

So, leaving everything except her watch and her money —her jewels were in the hotel safe—she slipped down the seven flights of stairs for she did not dare to take the elevator—and passing out of the side entrance was soon in the street with the cool air fanning her heated cheeks. So

far as she could see there was no boy on guard, nor did she pass one at all; and she heaved a deep sigh of relief as she sped down the street to catch a Pender car for the Horse Show Building.

CHAPTER XXX

Art thou gone in haste?
I'll not forsake thee;
Runn'st thou ne'er so fast,
I'll o'ertake thee.

WILLIAM ROWLEY.

PUCK was going splendidly and with every mile that sped away under his swift little feet, Marjorie's spirits were rising. She had passed safely through the streets of the city with their noisy trams, their shrieking motors and their treacherous, slippery pavements; and though her mount had snorted and shied more than once, he had confidence in his rider and the firm little hand on his mouth, so he had allowed himself to be coaxed past terrible groaning auto-trucks loaded with ghastly white objects that towered above him and grim steamshovels that seemed to lie in ambush, thrusting their huge black probosces threateningly into the sky and many other, to him, fearful and wonderful objects.

Now they had passed all these alarms, the noise and the lights and the people and were out on the clean country road; and it was not to be wondered at perhaps that after the fear and hurry and excitement of the last hour or so, the girl should feel a deep sense of relief to be on the way home. She conjured up to herself her little bedroom off the kitchen with its narrow cot bed and rude dresser, and hungered for its homely quiet and seclusion with a deep longing. In the last two days, she had been taught how much her new life with the Boltons, humble and uneventful

ful as it was, had taken hold upon her heart. There was a genuineness and a depth of affection in this humble family that she had never known in her guardian's stately home; and it was filling a need of her nature that had never been supplied before.

It was true that she had a long and lonely road before her, one to which she was an entire stranger; and she knew that it would be dark ere she would be halfway on her journey; but even the knowledge of this was only a slight damper on her exaltation. Just that afternoon, she had asked Keith if it would be practicable for her to ride Puck up to Portlake herself when she went back; and he had said it would be quite easy. The distance was not too great, about thirty miles, and the road was good nearly all the way and not hard to follow. He had done it himself more than once; and had found it well worth while for the scenery. She was aware that what might be all right in the daytime might be different at night; but she felt that with a good horse under her, she would not be nervous. It is wonderful the courage that one absorbs from one's steed when one feels it throbbing with life and mettle beneath one, obedient to the touch of the hand upon a mouth of velvet. What tramp or thug could ever lay hand on her so long as she was on Puck's back? and mounted highwaymen, she reflected, had passed away with the middle ages.

Puck soon settled down to business and trotted along steadily past subdivision sign and name-posts of streets on the fringe of the forest where the name was yet all there was of them; past miles of lonely fir trees with an occasional clearing to accommodate a house or shack; and the sun was just setting gloriously to the rear as they clattered down the hill over the planked road into Barnet, with its lumber mills along the Inlet. Its fiery glow lit

up with rosy splendours the tall pines that clothe the slopes along which the road switchbacks up and down all the way from Barnet to Port Moody and was reflected in the water, appearing and disappearing coquettishly away far below. Marjorie had motored through Switzerland and Spain; but she could remember nothing that was finer than this combination of forest and firth, transfigured as it was by the sunset.

It was slow travelling, however, as the hills were so steep that it meant a walking pace both up and down. Only along the wooden bridges across the wide canyons, Puck trotted swiftly, his hoofs making a grand clatter that echoed from the mountainside. It was lonely, too, not a house or a creature to be seen, and she felt thankful that at least, the daylight was still with her.

The road as it enters Port Moody comes in by the back of an oil refinery; and what with the tanks that lined the road and the strange gaspings and clankings that came from the machinery, it was all Marjorie could do to get her horse to go past. The road was steep and narrow and there was little room to swerve; but although he shied and jibbed and generally made a nuisance of himself, she conquered him at last.

"Now, you're all right, stupid pony," she said to soothe him, when she had pulled him up panting and trembling after his frightened, headlong rush past this unknown monster that lurked by the roadside; "if you would only trust your mistress and not to your own foolish wits, you would be all right. There will be a fine feed at the end of your journey, if you only knew it, and a kind little master that will pet you all day long to-morrow."

Port Moody lies on a gentle slope with a steep, wooded hill at the back of it; and as she rode through its straggling streets, she enjoyed the cheerfulness after the lonely road

she had left behind her. Groups of children played about and their mothers gossiped around their doors. Some stared after her strangely as if the sight of an equestrienne with side-saddle and habit was a strange sight to them or perhaps it was the lateness of the hour that caused their wonder.

She asked a workman whom she met carrying a spade and dinner bucket how to find her way and he too seemed to be wondering what she was doing so late upon the road. It was three miles or so to Coquitlam, he told her, and the going was good most of the way. Some of it had been newly rocked, however, and would be hard on her horse's feet.

At the hotel she stopped to give Puck a drink which he needed badly for he had been warm and was thirsty; but she was careful not to let him have too much. Soon she was out again on the highroad, and saw with regret the last house vanishing behind her.

However, there was still enough light to see by and it lasted her all the way into Coquitlam, the ambitious little town where the Canadian Pacific Railway had lately installed its workshops. A city of magnificent distances it might well be called, for it stretches out sporadically in all directions with little clumps of houses or business blocks of wooden construction; but the main street opposite the railway station, Marjorie found brightly lighted and stirring with a good deal of life.

By this time she was thinking with regret of the plate of soup that had been left almost untasted at the hotel and the stimulus of the excitement having passed, she was feeling hungry and faint indeed. So, she stopped at a little baker's shop and dismounting on the wooden sidewalk, in front of it, she got the woman in charge to give her a glass of milk and some buns. She, too, seemed as-

tonished at her appearance and would have liked to find out where she was going; but Marjorie, mindful of Inspector Brown, had no will to satisfy her curiosity.

It was necessary to carry out a chair from which to mount again and there was some excitement caused by Puck's behaviour. He was not used to chairs and strenuously objected to have one anywhere near him; and in his whirling and turning he was likely to have attracted the whole population of the place around himself and his mistress. He also very nearly trod on her foot as well.

However, it was not long before a man came to her rescue who evidently understood how to help a lady to mount and amid some jeering remarks from a group of small boys, she rode off feeling, if somewhat flustered, yet invigorated and refreshed by her frugal repast.

The west-bound train came thundering in just as she was crossing the bridge over the Coquitlam, and she had more excitement with her horse, who gave her all she could do to control him; and for a moment or two she was inclined to sympathise heartily with the lady who had formerly owned him but who lacked "hands." However, she got control of him before he could carry her over the bank, and, crossing the railroad track for the second time, she soon left the village in her rear. A large electric advertising sign blazed forth on the south and its cheering rays and the numerous lights from the houses looked alluring to her as she faced the dreary road ahead; but she put aside the temptation to stay. She might have stopped at the hotel but she was timid about it, not knowing what sort of place it might be. She did not relish the idea of presenting herself there at that time of night all alone as she was.

It was now about half-past nine and although the twilight had passed away, the moon, while somewhat ob-

scured by a bank of clouds that had blown up, still gave plenty of light to see the road by. The Pitt River was only a mile or more away and the ground was low and level and marshy so that the road had been planked; and it made a smooth, springy footing for her horse's feet. At first, there were a few farmhouses; but these were soon passed and there was naught on either side but marshy fields bounded by a deep ditch. She could see not far ahead, however, the high dykes along the river bank and the group of buildings that stand near the bridge. She remembered seeing those from the car window and she was cheered by the sight of them ahead. Truth to tell, she was beginning to feel very nervous and to think that she had been foolhardy to attempt to ride home that night. She might have remained hidden in her room and made her escape in the morning as, if Mr. Leicester did not betray her, it was not likely that her guardian would find out that she was in the hotel. True, her name was on the register but it was not likely that he would look there.

Now that the darkness had come on, she found herself oppressed by the stillness and the loneliness of her surroundings; and she was beginning to feel stiff and saddle-sore and very tired. Puck, too, was beginning to show signs of fag, and he seemed to be wondering where his mistress could be going so late at night. He, too, was soft and unused to such a long journey and now it took some urging to get him off a walk.

However, Marjorie plodded steadily on. She felt that if she was once across the Pitt River she would feel that the worst half of her journey was over. She seemed to be a long time in getting to it, however. These level stretches seem short to the eye but they are deceiving. An occasional bush by the wayside would startle her by

its likeness to the figure of a man, or a stray cow rising startled from its bed beside the ditch would set her heart to beating wildly.

"You're a little goose to allow yourself to be frightened this way," she would say to reassure herself; but the next time something arose to startle her it was just the same.

Suddenly as she was riding quietly along, without a moment's warning the saddle turned with her; and she had just time to give a spring that landed her on her hands and knees on the grass at the side of the road but luckily clear of Puck's hoofs.

She arose unhurt but somewhat shaken. The saddle had fallen and the pony, realising that something was wrong, stood still glad of a rest.

Here was a serious mishap, indeed. She examined the saddle and found that the strap of the surcingle had broken off. If she had had a pocket-knife, she could have made a hole in the stump as there was still enough of it left to have fitted into the buckle but there was no hole. The only thing to do was to walk until she could find some one that would mend it for her. So she threw the saddle on Puck's back again and started to lead him.

She had not gone very far before she came to a place where the road takes a turn to the right just before the last stretch that leads down to the river, when suddenly three figures came in sight round the corner. As they caught sight of her, two of them jumped quickly to the side of the road as if to flee into the fields but the third stood his ground and quickly arrested his companions' flight.

"Come back here, you fools," Marjorie heard him call; "it's only a girl."

He came boldly on, the two others following him a pace or two behind, their furtive glances to left and right

proclaiming their uneasiness. Marjorie would have passed on as she was alarmed by their actions and the disquieting words of the one who had spoken; but the latter halted right in front of her and she was obliged to stop too.

"What's the matter, miss?" he said, not uncivilly. "Have you come a cropper?"

He was a tall, powerfully-built man perhaps about thirty so far as she could judge in the darkness and as he spoke there came to her on the pure night air the faint odour of liquor.

"My surcingle strap broke," she said, seeing that there was no chance of avoiding him and making a virtue of necessity. "If you have a penknife perhaps you would mend it for me. All that it needs is a hole to be bored in the strap."

"Come on, Mike," said one of the other two who was short and thick-set. "This ain't no time to be sparkin'," and he glanced nervously around as he spoke. "Ain't that right, Jake?" he added appealing to the third man who stood a little farther off. He, too, seemed nervous and stood on the side of the road, his legs eloquent of irresolution, evidently anxious to be gone and yet not wishing to be parted from his companions. When he spoke, his voice was thick and it was plain that he had been drinking heavily.

"You bet it's right, Bill," he replied with an oath. "Mike don't care a bit for us. We'd ha' been at Coquitlam by this time if I had had my way."

"Just stow your gab, Jake," the tall man said angrily. "If you'd ha' had your way you would have been so full of booze, you wouldn't be able to stand up now. I'm goin' to fix the lady's saddle for her. You an' Bill can go or stay as you will. 'Twon't take a minute any-

way," and he took a knife from his pocket and quickly pierced a hole in the leather and tightened up the saddle again.

Marjorie, meanwhile, stood looking on, her heart beating wildly with nervousness, for she realised the evil character of the men with whom she had to do. What partially reassured her was that the two of them at least were anxious to proceed and evidently wanted to take their companion with them.

When he had finished his task, he still fingered about the strap as if to satisfy himself that it was all right; and apparently not quite satisfied, he drew a match from his vest pocket and striking it on his trousers held it to the saddle. Just for a moment he held it there and then as if by accident, he suddenly thrust it up towards Marjorie's face. She stepped back a pace in alarm. The man's eyes swept her features for a moment and then fell to the white neck below and the sunburst of diamonds and sapphires that encircled it and sparkled in the gleam of the match. Marjorie's frightened gaze took in the sudden start of surprise and she saw the face, fierce and predatory before, grow suddenly more so, the eyelids contracting queerly as covetousness masked the heavy, coarse features.

"I'll have to trouble you for these sparklers, miss," he said, advancing the pace that Marjorie had receded.

In times of sudden terror, impulse takes command of reason; and it was so with Marjorie. As the man moved towards her, with the quickness of a startled deer, she darted round behind Puck's heels closely followed by the robber who, however, received a kick from Puck in the passing that stretched him for the moment on the ground, cursing with anger and pain. This gave Marjorie a chance and she was not slow to take advantage of it.

There was a hollow stump by the side of the road and the moment that her feet touched the ground, she made a dash around this thinking that perhaps she might be able to elude her pursuer. The stump, however, was one of these monsters so plentiful in British Columbia that frequently excite the wonder of the stranger from the East who is unused to the enormous forest growths of the humid western slopes. After some woodsman had cut down the tree leaving it standing twenty feet of ugliness, a sad monument of mutilation, it had remained for years and years defying the elements. Then some road foreman more zealous than his predecessors had come along and decided to put an end to it. With his trusty henchman, he had attacked it, had dug around its roots and pierced into its entrails; had rent its mighty girth with dynamite and lighted a fire in its vitals, all at great expenditure of public monies; and then had left it to consume. The fire for a time had blazed away merrily, eating out gradually all but the very outer shell of the great stump and leaving a great hole down in its centre many feet in diameter and several feet deep. Then even it, growing tired of the contest, had expired and left the black, skeleton-like frame still braving the elements. By this time, some of the zeal of the road-foreman having waned and his appropriation diminished, he had been content to leave his job unfinished; and no one since had ever had the desire to tackle the old stump again. One of its roots now tripped up Marjorie and she stumbled headlong into the black cavity, her shoulder cannoning against its rounded interior, which served mercifully to break the violence of her fall, and there she lay still.

How long she lay senseless she did not know—it could only have been a few moments; but the first thing that broke upon her consciousness, faintly and as if at a great

distance, was the sound of a voice calling to her. The accents, somehow, seemed familiar and they brought with them a vague sense of danger, of menace, of such a paralysing terror as one often experiences in a nightmare, chilling the blood and taking away the power of speech. They became louder and more insistent, sounding now clearly above the strange drumming in her ears and the suffocating throbbing of her pulses. She opened her eyes to encounter something blue and luminous of an oblong shape which she soon recognised to be the sky.

"Come out of there, will you," the voice cried harsh and strident. "We see you all right and it's no use your hiding," and there followed a string of oaths and threats most of which to Marjorie was quite unintelligible.

"It's no use, Mike," said another voice; "she ain't in there. She must be out in the field somewhere. I ain't goin' to wait no longer."

"I tell you she must be in there. There's no place else she could be. I was right after her, wasn't I? I'd ha' had her, too, if that brute hadn't kicked me," and he swore again.

"Why don't you go in after her then," the other jeered. "I guess you're scared, ain't you? If she's in there, why don't you fetch 'er out 'stead of standin' there hollerin' your head off. 'Tain't so deep but what you can easy get out again if you ain't scared of her," and he laughed tauntingly.

"Scared of nothin'," replied the other, who was still feeling his injured leg rather anxiously. "I'll go in in half a minute if she doesn't come out. D'ye hear," and Marjorie could see his round head in silhouette as he peered into the hole. It was hard for her to realise that although he seemed to be looking right down upon her almost, yet lying in the dark shadows she was quite in-

visible to him. She was now conscious and the events of the last few minutes had all come back to her and she realised that she must have fallen somehow into the interior of the stump that she had tried to get around. As the real truth of the situation came to her the indefinite terror of her first awakening was transformed into one that was actual and imminent. She could plainly hear every word that was spoken, for in reality the men were only a few feet away.

"Hist," said one of them. "There's Jake shoutin' somethin'."

"Better lie low, you chaps," she heard the voice from the other side of the road. "Here comes a cove on a horse flyin' like mad too."

Then there was the sound of fast galloping hoofs which ceased suddenly as the horse came near and was pulled up on its haunches, its feet thundering loudly on the hard planked road, as it pranced around excitedly. Then a voice the keen incisive tones of which were familiar to her rang out distinctly. It was Keith's.

"Halloa, there! Hope I didn't startle you. I wanted to ask if you had met a young lady on horseback. I am trying to overtake her."

"Young lady?" was the hiccoughing reply. "No, I hain't seen no young ladies, hic; hain't seen no one."

Marjorie tried to cry out. Hope had surged into her heart at the well-known voice; but to her dismay she found she was unable to utter a word. Her tongue seemed to be paralysed and all she could do was to lie still and listen. Her brain was now perfectly clear; and when she heard the horse's footsteps again as it moved on at a gallop, she realised that Keith had naturally taken the man's words for true and ridden on and she was abandoned. She felt that she was willing enough to let

the man have her jewels but go forth to him she dared not. Her one hope was that he would go away without looking farther for her. Despair seized hold of her and she same nigh swooning again with the sudden revulsion of feeling.

But the voices above her began again and by a strong effort of will she forced herself to concentrate her mind on what they were saying.

"Mike, will you see now what a devil of a mess you've got us into? Strikes me we'd better git when the goin's good. That cove there's liable to raise hell when he can't find the girl; an' if we get caught it's the pen for us, sure thing."

"Who's scared now," the other mocked. "Who's goin' to know we did it? Anyway I'm goin' to have these sparklers if I stay here all night. The other job didn't pan out well and here's our chance to make up for it. If we're caught it won't make much difference; we'd get the pen anyway for the other."

"The cove may come back."

"Let 'im come. We'll fix him if he does. Are you coming out or shall I come down and get you?" he shouted again over the brink of the hole. "Better come out and hand over that necklace. I've got to have it, I tell you, and I can't stay here all night;" and he swore again, his voice thick with fury.

The third man, Jake, had evidently come over and joined them and his voice was now joined to the colloquy.

"Didn't I fool the chap fine though?" he crowed in drunken glee. "'I hain't seen no young ladies,' says I; an' off 'e goes without another word."

"Aye, but if he comes back, I'm thinkin' you'll laugh on the other side ov yer face. This country ain't like

Washington or Oregon, I'm telling you. They don't lose no time when they cop a fellow here an' a smart lawyer ain't much use to a chap. They're mighty free with the lash too for highway robbery. There's a cove I know doin' time at Westminster now who got twelve with the cat when he went in an' he's got another two dozen comin' to him before he gets out; an' all for holdin' up a Chink an' takin' fifty cents off 'im."

"Stow your gab, Bill; you'll scare Jake out of his senses if you don't shut up."

"Crickey, I didn't think about 'im comin' back," Jake's voice was heard in a different tone from before, quavery and nervous. "I guess that I'll be goin' on, Mike; thash booze kind of strong, you know—hic. So good-night, boys; little Willie's goin' to Seattle, hic. This lash business ain't no good for a white man."

"I'm goin' with Jake, Mike. He's got more sense than you have spite of all the whisky 'e's got aboard. After that job up the river, the sooner we're across the line the better. I ain't hankerin' after free board an' lodgin' on this side at all; an' if you start——"

"Aw come on, don't be a quitter, Bill; there's lots of time to catch the Seattle train to-morrow morning. That mutt, Jake'll jist get drunk at the Junction an' he'll be anchored there for two or three days. Better stay with me. These jewels are the real thing, believe me."

"Nope, I'm goin' along. You're altogether too reckless for me. Looks a bit unhealthy for my stomach. After that other thing, now's the time to lay low and here you are startin' more trouble. I wish you well out of it, that's all."

A string of oaths and abuse was all the reply to this speech and then there was silence for a minute. Marjorie's heart almost stopped beating when she realised

that the man was left alone and she felt more despairing than ever.

She now heard the rustling of paper and the flare of a match which he had struck lighted up his face clearly, flushed and bloated as it was. He held the match to a strip of paper he held in his left hand.

"Now, miss; we'll be able to see where you have hidden yourself. You would have been better to have come out in the first place;" and he threw the flaring strip down into the hole, kneeling down on one knee as he did so the better to see inside. Right beside Marjorie it landed and involuntarily she shrank back from it, trying to escape the gaze of these crafty eyes that peered down upon her.

"Ha, I see you now," their owner exclaimed in a tone of triumph but it was short-lived. A tall, dark figure had stolen up behind him. Then a hand was laid upon his collar and another on his throat with no gentle clasp; and he was drawn back while the stranger knelt with one knee on his chest and pressed him rudely to the ground. There was a brief struggle in which the man underneath fought with the energy of despair. Although taken completely by surprise, he had great strength and he was perfectly fresh; while Keith—for the new comer was he—had been running and was all out of breath. Frantically they struggled, in silence except for an occasional heavy gasp from one or the other that bore witness to the strenuousness of the conflict; and as the man below squirmed and kicked furiously in his efforts to throw off Keith, all at once he succeeded in pushing him to one side and they both rolled over the brink into the hole. As Keith felt himself going over, instinctively he let go of his opponent with one hand and grasped a piece of root that offered itself. This helped him to stay his fall and en-

abled him to come down on top of his enemy who landed heavily on his back, making a comparatively soft cushion for Keith to alight upon. The latter lost no time in again getting to clutches with his opponent; but he soon found that it was unnecessary as he seemed to have been stunned by his fall. Keith waited for a few moments to see if he might possibly be shamming; but as soon as he was assured that he was not he turned around to look for Marjorie.

"Are you there, Marjorie—Miss Colquhoun?" he said, breathless from the struggle and his voice trembling with apprehension. All sorts of terrible possibilities were passing through his mind; and the uncanny darkness of the place where he found himself served to intensify somewhat his feelings of horror and foreboding.

"Oh, Mr. Leicester, is that you? I am so glad," said a voice just at his ear and a small hand reached out and softly touched his shoulder. "But are you hurt?"

She had heard the scuffle above her and had been cheered by the hope that it meant a rescue although she could not be sure that it was not one of the other ruffians that had come back and had fallen upon his comrade. In her excitement, she found she was able to sit up and she was actually steeling her courage to make an attempt to climb out of the hole, when to her terror the two fell in beside her. It was with a sob of delight and relief that she answered Keith's call.

"Are you all right?" he asked eagerly, not heeding her question.

"I—I—think so," she replied somewhat doubtfully. "I fell in here and I suppose I was a bit stunned at first. I think I am all right now; if I could just get out. The man wanted to rob me of my necklace and as I was running away, I fell in here."

"Let me help you," he said, putting out an exploring arm—for as yet he could distinguish nothing in the gloom—and succeeding in making prisoner the hand that had touched him and pressing for a moment the small fingers with a warmth that he felt was justified by the circumstances. There was an answering pressure, too, that thrilled him delightfully; but he did not dare to tempt the gods by taking an undue advantage. Rising to his feet with some difficulty and stepping from astride his prostrate foe with care to avoid stepping on him, he put his arm around Marjorie's waist and lifted her to her feet. For a moment, her hair brushed against his cheek and its faint perfume wafting on his already flustered senses was almost too much for all the good resolutions that he had been formulating all the way up. She was an heiress and therefore clearly not for him, he had resolved; yet he found the impulse to take her in his arms and tell her that he loved her almost irresistible. However, just at the psychological moment, a diversion occurred that brought him back to a sense of his duty. The prostrate man moaned.

Keith became his ordinary, sane self again.

"Let me jump up first and then I can pull you out," he said. "I see our friend here is beginning to come to himself. I trust that he is not so badly hurt as to cheat him out of the punishment he deserves."

Without waiting for her to speak, he scrambled out of the hole and taking hold of her hands he was able to lift her up beside him, where she stood trembling a little and stiff but still able to stand with his arm supporting her. He was about to speak when they heard the sound of a motor coming east along the road towards them.

"I'd better stop it," Keith said regretfully after a few

moments of consideration. He was loath to bring a third party in to interrupt the sweetness of this hour of reunion, this time of relief and expansion when the fulness of their hearts had broken down the constraints of conventionality. But he had to think of his prisoner, the injured man and of how he was to dispose of him. So he hailed the car loudly as it came near; and it quickly came to a stop opposite them. There were two men in the front seat.

"Halloa, what's the matter here, somebody had a smash-up?" said the one who was driving. "So it's you, is it, Mr. Leicester?" he said as he recognised Keith, "and the girl too, by George!" he added as his glance fell on Marjorie. "Bob, I guess we were in time after all."

"You come just in the nick of time, Inspector Brown," said Keith as he recognised the officer; "but I am surprised to see you so far from home." He knew very well what had brought them; but with the knowledge that he now possessed as to Marjorie's identity, he could not resist the temptation to poke a little fun at the detectives who had given both to her and to himself such an unpleasant quarter of an hour.

"Just in the nick of time; you're right there, my boy," he replied grimly; "and as for the reason we're here, we'll very soon show you that, won't we, Bob?"

"You just bet we will," said Bob, as he skipped nimbly out of the car and advanced round to the other side of the couple so as to be ready in case of any attempt to escape. "'Once bit, twice shy,' you know."

"I'm afraid that I shall have to arrest you both, this time, my light-hearted friend," said Inspector Brown, himself stepping out and planting himself on the near side of the pair. He was distinctly nettled to find Keith treating so lightly of the matter; and he was in no mind to be

made a fool of, especially by one who, if not a criminal, had been consorting with one. He was angry with himself for having let sentiment interfere with business before and he was angry with Keith for having persuaded him against his better judgment. Now he welcomed the chance to get even with him. With a quick movement he snatched something from his pocket that clinked suggestively as he drew it forth. In the darkness it was impossible to see what it was. Meanwhile the other man had moved in behind Marjorie and a couple of paces nearer to Keith.

Marjorie had recognised the two detectives with dismay, although their coming was but a minor disaster after the danger that she had just escaped from. It came to her all at once, what she had completely forgotten in the exciting events of the night, that she had broken her parole; that she was still under police surveillance. Through her, Mr. Leicester was likely to suffer much unpleasantness as well as perhaps the loss of his two thousand dollars because of her thoughtlessness. No doubt, the matter could all be explained; but to do so, it would be necessary to disclose her identity and call her guardian to her aid to corroborate her story. This would, indeed, be a bitter draught to swallow; but it would have to be done, she reflected, in order to atone as far as possible for the wrong that she had already done.

Her heart sank as she listened to the Inspector's grim words and noticed the sinister action of the two men as they closed around Keith. With the quick intuition of fear, she guessed that it was a pair of handcuffs that Inspector Brown had pulled from his pocket; and involuntarily she drew in close to Keith again—for she had stepped away from him a little as the car had come up—as if to protect him from the detective's threatened attack.

"You'd better stand back there, miss," warned Inspector Brown. "You'll be the less likely to get hurt if Mr. Leicester isn't sensible. Best give yourself up quietly, sir," he said to Keith, "and save trouble to us all."

Keith laughed.

"I haven't the faintest intention of resisting," he said; "so you needn't worry about that. I would like you to allow Miss Colquhoun to get into the car and sit down, as she has just come through a very trying experience and must be faint," he said. "Don't be afraid," he whispered in her ear; "it's all right."

"Here now," said the Inspector suspiciously; "none of that. You needn't try any tricks on me or it'll be the worse for you. I'll be delighted to have the lady get into the car—indeed, I'll invite her most urgently," he added, laughing sardonically, "as soon as I have disposed of you. Once I have you safe, it'll be easy enough to get her. Just let me slip these on your wrists," and he moved yet a step nearer.

"Just a minute, my man," said Keith coolly. "I quite believe that you think you are doing your duty; but you had better be careful. Before you take the responsibility of arresting me, you had better tell me just what it is for."

"Come now, cut out all this injured innocence business. It don't work with us," said the other detective impatiently. "I want to be on the road home again and the sooner the better."

"Yes, I'll tell you what for and pretty quick, too," said Inspector Brown raising his voice in anger. "For aiding and abetting a suspected criminal to escape, that's what for; and quite enough for me, too, I'm telling you."

"I thought it was agreed between us in Mr. Graham's

office," said Keith speaking slowly and quietly and with perfect calmness, "that so long as Miss Colquhoun was in my company, it would be all right, seeing that I, having my two thousand dollars at stake, would be the last to allow her to run away. I fail to see why, because we have taken a little spin out into the country and unfortunately met with an accident, there should be all this excitement."

"You were going to help her to jump her bail, though, my boy, and you needn't tell me any different," was the Inspector's angry reply. "She's turned you round her little finger just as she's fooled many a wiser man; and you were going along with her. So both of you will go with me and I'm going to make the arrest now, I tell you."

"Softly, my friend, softly," said Keith. "If you won't listen to reason along that line perhaps you will along this. I am a Justice of the Peace as well as Police Commissioner for my municipality; and it would certainly be difficult for you to explain to the magistrate in the morning why you came to arrest me outside of your own jurisdiction and within mine—you'll look rather silly, believe me, Inspector Brown, and it won't do your reputation as a smart officer any good. I am escorting Miss Colquhoun to her home near Portlake and I shall undertake to produce her at any time if required as she has not the faintest intention of running away."

The Inspector slipped what he held in his hand unobtrusively back into his pocket; and taking out his handkerchief, he wiped his brow.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" he exclaimed. "Bob, what do you think of that?"

"You can search me," declared Bob, shaking his head sadly.

"Perhaps it would be as well if you would allow Miss Colquhoun to get in," suggested Keith again mildly.

There was a pause during which nothing was spoken; and then with a sigh, the Inspector turned slowly and opened the door of the car. Keith assisted Marjorie to enter it and tucked her carefully in with the lap-robe. After he had assured himself that she was comfortable, he turned to the Inspector.

"Don't be down-hearted, Inspector," he said. "I have a prisoner of my own, I should like to turn over to you if you don't mind; and you can take all the credit of his capture yourselves. I hope he's not hurt much, though he's had rather a bad fall," and he explained just what had taken place.

The Inspector was at once all interest; and together the three men went and lifted the injured thug out of the hole where he was still lying. He groaned as he was being moved; but when Keith felt his pulse, it seemed to be beating strongly enough.

"There was a store held up at Mission yesterday," remarked the inspector reflectively. "I wonder if this chap might not have had a hand in it. There were three men involved in that though."

"There were two others with him," said Marjorie from the seat of the auto; "but they went on. I overheard them make some reference to 'some job up the river'."

"Is that so?" said the Inspector excitedly. "Then we'd better try to get hold of them."

"You remember we passed two men on the side of the road not long ago?" said the other detective. "If we hurry we can soon catch up to them but what are you going to do with these two?"

The Inspector was silent.

"Just a word with you, Inspector Brown," said Keith,

taking him on one side out of hearing of the others. "As a matter of fact, I can now tell you just who Miss Colquhoun is. She is the ward of Lord Angleside who is now at the Hotel Vancouver. He and his wife arrived this afternoon. They came after her; but she does not want to see them and is on her way back to Portlake to the people she is staying with."

"But if that is who she is, why all this mystery about it?" asked the Inspector sharply. "Why didn't she tell us and avoid all this bother?"

"She has been estranged from them," said Keith; "but no doubt, the misunderstandings will all be cleared away ere long. I have reason to believe that the Anglesides are coming up to Portlake to-morrow to see her. Now then, be a good fellow and run away after the real thugs and leave us alone."

"Oh, well," said the Inspector plainly conquered; "I've been in love myself and I don't want to be a spoil-sport, I'm sure. And if the lady is all that you say she is, well-connected and all that, I'm sure I wish you luck."

"There's one thing, though," said Keith; "I don't want her brought in as a witness against these fellows. No doubt, you can connect them with this Mission robbery. Probably they have some of the stuff on them; and that will be good enough. Miss Colquhoun, remember, will not prosecute."

"Oh, I guess that will be all right," was the reply. "I dare say we can manage without her well enough. I must be off though or those fellows may give us the slip."

"Miss Colquhoun, I have the horses tied up just a short distance farther on," said Keith to Marjorie. "That was what brought me back so quickly. I found Puck grazing by the side of the road and I knew that there was

something wrong. Do you feel able to go on or would you prefer to go back to town in the auto?"

"Oh, by all means, I should like to go on," said Marjorie eagerly; "that is—that is," she said shyly turning down her head, "if you would be able to see me home."

"Why, of course," said Keith with a note of pleasure in his voice. "Then that is settled, my friends. We shall leave the prisoner to you and I wish you good luck with the other two."

Marjorie had jumped lightly out of the auto with little trace of stiffness in her mien; and the two detectives lost no time in lifting their prisoner, who had now revived considerably, into the back seat, one of them getting in beside him to guard against any attempt at escape. Inspector Brown quickly cranked the car, which his colleague had already turned round during the former's brief tête-à-tête with Keith, and they were off with a parting wave of the hand.

Keith and Marjorie stood for a moment watching the receding auto.

"I almost hope that they won't be able to catch them," said the latter with a sigh, "but I suppose that it would really be better for other people if they were locked up. Life is a strange puzzle, isn't it, after all?" she added as they turned down the road to walk to where Keith had left the horses.

CHAPTER XXXI

"Oh haste thee, haste!" the lady cries,
"Though tempests round us gather;
I'll meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father."

CAMPBELL.

"I CAN never repay you for what you have done to-night," she said as they rode along. "When I think—" she tried to continue, but her voice failed her.

"But you must not think about it at all," said Keith in brisk, cheery tones of authority. "You have still a long ride before you and you must save all your energies for that; unless you would like to go back to the hotel at Coquitlam."

"Oh, no," she replied shuddering at the thought of turning back. "I want to keep right on. But how did you manage to follow me? I didn't think that any one could have caught up to me, on horseback at least."

"No, I'm afraid this isn't quite such a speedy beast as all that, though he's not so bad you know," said Keith smiling. "You see I started out in a motor and it was a case of the more hurry, the less speed. We had a puncture between Barnet and Port Moody which we didn't stop to repair; but between Port Moody and Coquitlam the chauffeur ran us into a pile of stones and sent us into the ditch. So I walked on, leaving the man with his car, and hired this beast at the livery stable at Coquitlam, where I also ascertained that you had passed through a short time before."

"I stopped there to have something to eat," said Marjorie.

"Well, they noticed you all right," said Keith. "It was quite romantic, you know," he rattled away thinking to distract her mind and relieve the tension. "There was a group of three or four in front of the hotel and I asked them, had they seen a young lady on horseback passing through; and you should have heard them all speak at once to tell me. I didn't stop long to listen though."

"You must be tired out and you haven't had anything to eat," she said with sudden solicitude. "I haven't deserved that you should show me such kindness."

"It is you that must be tired after your long ride and faint from your fright. Here we come to the Pitt River now," he said, as they came to a wooden bridge that led up to the dyke along the bank. "That little house on the top is where the ferryman stays. Let's hope he is there."

They climbed the slight ascent and Keith dismounted and knocked at the door. There was no answer at first but when he knocked again a deep voice came out to them.

"All right, I'll be there in five minutes," it said.

"Let us go down and sit on the bank until he comes," said Keith.

Marjorie welcomed the suggestion as she was now feeling so faint that she could hardly stay on her horse. After he had led the two horses down to the edge of the landing, Keith almost lifted her out of the saddle; and when he tried to set her on her feet, she would have fallen had he not caught her again in his arms. He carried her to the side and set her gently down on a wooden bench that offered a convenient seat.

"Feeling a bit queer, aren't you?" he said, supporting her with his arm. "No wonder, after such a fright!"

"I am ashamed of myself to be so silly," she replied faintly; "I never was taken this way before; but I'll be all right in a minute."

"If you can sit up, I'll get something that will brace you a bit," said Keith; and he ran to the edge and returned with his hat half full of water. A little of this he dashed in her face and he made her drink some; and she immediately began to feel better. Her face was pale in the moonlight but she was smiling faintly up at him.

"You are too good to me," she protested.

Keith's emotions had been like to get the better of his judgment and he did not trust himself to speak. The holding her in his arms was rather too strong for all the good resolutions of abnegation which he had made in the motor as he was speeding along in pursuit.

"You must take care, my boy," he was saying to himself; "or you will be disgracing yourself. You should have told her of your love in the Park this afternoon. Now that you know that she is an heiress, it is out of the question. This little runaway trip to the West is just a girlish escapade; and she will soon be back in her own gay world amongst her own people and she will look back on the few months she spent out here as a kind of romantic madness. For a rancher like you to ask her to marry you, it wouldn't be playing the game. She's not much more than a child and estranged from her guardian at that; and to speak would be to take an unfair advantage."

As these thoughts were passing through his mind, he sat gazing out upon the broad, dark river as it flowed along mysterious and silent except for the soft lappings and gurglings around the piles of the landing upon which they sat. He was too much engrossed to hear her when

she spoke again and she had to repeat what she said in a tone more insistent.

"You have not asked me why I ran away and broke my parole?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he excused himself; "I'm afraid my wits were wool-gathering. No, it is true I have not," he replied with provoking phlegm.

"But why?" she said in a tone slightly petulant. "Are you not angry? and are you not curious?"

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked, taking out a cigarette and proceeding to light it with elaborate care. "No," he replied, after he had taken a few puffs; "I am not curious because I know; and I am not angry because I can sympathise with your feelings in the predicament."

"Then who told you? You didn't speak to them of me?" she asked with sudden alarm.

"Of course, I had to," he replied, still keeping his gaze straight before him. "I told them all about you and your little trouble with Inspector Brown and the arrangements we had made for bail and all the rest of it."

He was speaking gruffly but she knew by a something in his tone that he was not in earnest. In any case, she felt that he would not have given her secret away. She knew him well enough for that; and if she had misjudged him once, she was not going to be so quick to do it again. At the same time, she was puzzled by the changed inflection of his voice, a certain suggestion of constraint which was almost too subtle to be noticeable at all.

"You're joking, of course," she said; "but I want to know who told you about me and what they told you. They didn't notice me with you or when I was leaving the dining-room, did they?"

"I don't think they did," Keith answered; "they were too much occupied with your humble servant, I fancy.

They asked me to sit with them and I, of course, refused, only to find that you had flown. Then, much against my inclination, I went over and took the meal with them; though as you may imagine I was none too happy about it."

"I'm so sorry," she said hesitating for a brief space, reluctant to say what was in her mind yet anxious to sound him farther; "but your friend would be glad, was she not?" she concluded at last, still looking down and thankful for the obscurity of night that concealed the hot flush that she felt was on her cheeks.

"I am afraid that I was not considering her very much," said Keith speaking lightly though his heart was thumping alarmingly in his chest. "I had it out with her after dinner in the lounge though. That was all over and finished with three years ago by her own wish; it could never be revived. It was then she told me about this young runaway that Lord Angleside and his son have come in search of. They have your address all right and I shouldn't be surprised to see them at Bolton's to-morrow."

"Oh, dear, I wish that ferryman would hurry up," she said rising in agitation. "I think I should like to be going on. I suppose Wilfrid will be there too; and there will be a dreadful scene. Oh, I'm so glad at any rate they didn't catch me in town;" and she went over to stroke the noses of the horses that were standing quietly close by, too tired to stir from the spot where Keith had left them.

The ferryman, as if in answer to their wish, at this moment appeared and took down the wooden rail on the end of the scow permitting them to lead the horses aboard. This took some coaxing as both of them at first objected evidently feeling nervous about their novel surroundings. When the ferryman had gone below and the gasoline en-

gine which propelled the scow across by means of a cable stretching from bank to bank, started up with weird gaspings and clankings, it was all Keith could do to keep the frightened animals from jumping over the side. There was not much opportunity for further conversation, therefore, until they arrived safely at the other side.

CHAPTER XXXII

I and my mistress side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night!

BROWNING.

Her maiden pride, her haughty name,
My dumb devotion shall not shame;
The love that no return doth crave
To knightly levels lifts the slave.

WHITTIER.

THEY rode up the wooden approach on the other side and took their way along the level meadowlands beyond. To their left, the Golden Ears now towered in lonely majesty; and Marjorie welcomed the sight of their familiar peaks, for they helped her to realise that she was nearing home. The mystery of the night and the moonlight lay upon the sleeping country through which they passed and as they rode along now in silence—for both were wrapped in their thoughts—she almost felt as if she was in dreamland, the sense of unreality was so persistent. The horses' hoofbeats were deadened by the layer of dust that covered the road and they moved along noiselessly at a walking pace. Occasionally, however, an owl perched on the fence at the side of the road would dart away with a startling screech and the air was vocal with the multitudinous croaking of the frogs.

"Your British Columbia orchestra is out in full force to-night," said Marjorie at last when the silence had begun to weigh upon her.

"Yes, they are celebrating your homecoming," said Keith, smiling down at her. "Now if you were in

England, you might be listening to the nightingales."

"All the same the frogs have their good points," she replied. "There's a something soothing and soul-satisfying in their myriad-throated chorus that never ceases all night long. However, it's true enough, as one of your poets has it, that 'a bull-frog am no nightingale,'" she quoted.

"Yes, there is a soothing effect, soothing if not soporific," he agreed; "not in the chirruping of the frogs alone but that and the moonlight and the sleeping country taken together. How petty and empty seem all the fuss and fretting of the daytime on a night like this. If we could only forget about it—the false worships and the sham conventions and the golden calves—" he went on surprised somewhat at his own temerity but the spell of the night was upon him too; "how you and I would be able to talk to one another if there were no such things as rank and riches."

She sensed the pent-up feeling in his tone and though she feared its flowing forth, Eve-like she could not resist the temptation to dally with it.

"We might use Dick's magic formula, 'let's pretend,'" she suggested in a tone so low as to be hardly audible.

He glanced at her quickly but her eyes were on the road ahead.

"Ah, if we only had the courage," he said regretfully; "and then the pretending would be the real after all. You remember," he went on, "this afternoon I told you that there was something that I would like to tell you but I felt I did not have the right to speak. I wish that I had spoken then; for now, it seems I have less right than ever."

She smiled at him in the moonlight and it seemed her smile held a hint of mockery.

"There was once a monster of ancient Egypt," she said flouting his earnestness though there was a catch in her voice that belied her raillery, "that loved to talk in riddles."

"For that matter," said Keith, gaining courage as he looked at her, "there was once a maiden of British Columbia that delighted to talk in parables and by means of these she sought to teach a proud and presumptuous youth who had insulted her. Perhaps, if you object to riddles, one might take a leaf from her book."

She had slightly turned her head and her face was in the shadow.

"She used to tell about a knight called Chivalry, who fell upon evil times," he went on, "about whom she told sad stories of degeneracy and decay. There was a knight she didn't know of, whose name doesn't matter. Now this knight fell in love with a maiden whom he had befriended in a sneaking sort of way—he had rescued her from some inconvenience from a pair of villains who had evil designs on her; not, mind you, by any bravery or the strength of his own right arm but merely by the risking of his money-bags. The maiden—as maidens often will—was unduly grateful for this small service and magnified it far beyond what it deserved; and she graciously permitted the knight to be her attendant pending her return to home and safety. He, silly fellow, had fallen in love with her thinking her to be comparatively poor and friendless, though realising that she must be sprung from gentle lineage. He would not tell her of his love, however, until she had returned to her home again, fearing that that would be taking an unfair advantage of her helplessness."

"In truth, 'he was a verray parfit, gentil knyght,'" she quoted softly, as he paused for a moment in his tale.

"But, lo, while he waited," he went on without taking any notice of her interruption, "he found out that the maiden was really a great lady in her own right with a castle of her own and many retainers, while he, himself, was only an humble knight with one squire. She had merely been masquerading as a poor maiden, and now her powerful friends had come to seek her. Therefore, it became apparent to him that she was far beyond him and even if perchance she might listen to his suit, his pride and his poverty would not permit him to advance it."

"But don't you think that he was supersensitive?" she said when at last, he paused; but still her eyes were turned away from him. "What an uncomfortable pride to have; had the man no common sense?"

His heart was beating wildly and there was a tightening sensation in his chest; but he forced himself to an outward appearance of calmness.

"Well, you see he had been unfortunate in an earlier love affair in which the lady had humiliated him when he lost his lands; and he had vowed that it would never happen again."

"So, he argued that the second lady was of like character to the first," Marjorie suggested with a burst of fine indignation; "and 'he loved and he rode away,' I suppose. I'm afraid he was just another variety of the fickle knight in the poem. We need hardly waste any pity on him, I think, as his love could not have been very deep;" and in her contempt, at last, she looked at him but as quickly turned away again.

His heart was sore but he resisted the temptation to tell her out and out that he loved her. Every line of her slender figure as it swung easily in the saddle to her horse's stride, made him long to take her in his arms; but he told himself that he had no right. She might repent

afterwards when she realised what she had given up, and it would be his fault; for he could never go back and live in luxury on his wife's money. There were some sacrifices too great even for love; and a man's self-respect was surely one of them. He had done wrong to say as much as he had; and he must try to undo the mischief he had begun—if he had, indeed, aroused her interest or even her liking. Perhaps, in the future, something might happen to enable him to offer his suit on an equal footing; but, for the present, he had no right to take advantage of the unusual circumstances into which chance had brought them.

"And the maiden of high degree," she questioned after a short silence with the proud, little toss of her head which he had learned to know so well; "does the story say what were her feelings when the knight went away without having spoken?"

"Oh, well," he replied; "she may have missed him a little at first, but when she had come back to her castle and was surrounded by her friends and retainers, she was glad that she had seen the last of him."

She laughed a derisive little laugh but there was a note of pain in it. "I see," she said: "she was shallow and fickle as he was proud and fickle and there was a pair of them. Well, I do not like your parables; they deal with too unpleasant people. I think we had better return to realities after all. How far have we got to go now before we get home?"

I fear that they talked commonplaces for the rest of their journey and they found no more pleasure in the moonlight and the mountains and the night's mysterious witcheries, all the way to the loghouse in the clearing where Dicky was dreaming about his fairy godmother in the sweet, untroubled slumber of youth.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A man and a maid on a summer's day
When the breeze is soft and the skies are blue.

ANON.

MARJORIE awoke next morning to the clink of breakfast dishes which broke with a cheery sound on her returning consciousness after the troubled dreams that had vexed her repose. It had been nearly two when, having said good-night to Keith who had volunteered to take Puck home with him and bring him back in the morning, she had slipped in at the back door which was never locked, and got to bed without awakening any of the household.

It was long after her head touched the pillows, however, before she was able to get to sleep. Her mind was in a whirl of conflicting emotions. Her conversation with Keith, intimate and personal as it was, though dressed in the whimsical parable of the knight and the maiden, had left her with an odd ache at her heart, which she found it hard to explain. Then, she looked forward with some dread to the arrival of Lord and Lady Angleside and Wilfrid, her former fiancé, and to all the inevitable reproaches and explanations that it would involve. Aunt Sophronia was not likely to spare her; although the first fury of her anger had had plenty of time to cool in the past months. Lord Angleside, Marjorie did not fear so much as he was too easy-going and good-natured to treat her harshly. His had only been a passive part in forcing her engagement to his son.

How Wilfrid would behave was more uncertain and it was in connection with him that her conscience had

troubled her most of all. They had always been good "pals"; but except for their mutual fondness for animals and outdoor sports, there was nothing much in common between them. She had felt that in running away, she had been doing the best for both of them; but it was doubtful whether he would look at the matter in that light. He had been fond of her after a fashion; but it was the fondness of a comrade, she felt sure, rather than a lover. When she did finally get to sleep, her dreams were a distressing nightmare in which Wilfrid, Keith, the two detectives and her Aunt Sophronia came and went with most bewildering frequency; and through them all, she herself was either in imminent danger or deep disgrace. It was no wonder then that when she awoke in the morning it was with a grateful sense of relief that she recognised the familiar sound of Dick's spoon against the sides of his porridge bowl as he polished off the last few mouthfuls. Her room opened off the kitchen, and the light fir door had swung slightly ajar so that she could hear plainly the boy's voice when he began to speak.

"Aw, Dad," he was saying; "you might let me go. Marjorie must be in trouble or she would have come home yesterday."

"No, no, Dick; she will be all right," Bolton's deep voice was heard in reply. "Something has come up to keep her another day. You get the horse ready and go down to the train; and I think she will be there likely."

"But if she isn't there, I want to go right down to Vancouver, Dad," the boy's voice pleaded. "I'll walk all the way if you'll only let me go."

"We'll see what's to be done if she doesn't come," his father replied; and Marjorie heard him push back the chair and go outside.

She rose and began to dress as quickly and as silently

as possible; and when, a short time later, she stepped out into the kitchen, the boy was still seated at the table. He got up with a shout of surprise and delight but he was too bashful to make any other demonstration of welcome. He submitted, however, with a good grace to Marjorie's kiss before delivering himself of the volley of questions which rose to his lips.

"When did you get home? What kept you?" he burst out. "Won't Mother be glad to have you back again. We thought you were lost when you didn't come yesterday. And I waited till the very last train," he added plaintively.

"You poor boy!" exclaimed Marjorie sympathetically. "I suppose you did not get my letter then. I am so sorry but I couldn't help it, Dicky, dear; and I'm so glad to be home again with you and Mother. I suppose she is still asleep, is she?"

He nodded.

"She wasn't so well yesterday," he said, his face lengthening. "She can't keep from worrying and when you didn't come home, she was awfully afraid that something had happened to you. Dad said she didn't sleep till the morning and I wasn't to waken her."

"Poor little mother," said Marjorie; "but she will be all right now. I haven't got the money yet but I shall get it soon, Dick; and your mother will have the comfort she needs."

"Oh, I am so glad," the boy said; but his face fell as he noted for the first time the girl's pale cheeks and drooping mien. The events of the day before, the long ride and a nigh sleepless night had had their outward effect on her; and his keen eyes could not long overlook the depression of which her face was eloquent. "But you're all tired out!" he exclaimed with sudden solicitude. "I

wish I had been along with you to take care of you. What was it kept you?"

"Oh, I had an adventure, Dick, but I can't tell it to you now. I'm afraid your fairy godmother has come back in disgrace," she went on sadly; "but you're not asking whether she brought your gifts."

"I didn't want any gifts," said Dick indignantly. "I only wanted you back again."

"You remember the princess in the story that ran away from home," Marjorie went on in a low voice; "and how her friends found her after a while and took her back to reign over her kingdom. Well, dear, what would you think if my friends came after me to-day and wanted to take me away with them?"

The boy's face was white and his lips quivered.

"And you—and you would have to leave us for always," he stammered; "but I thought," he went on with a gleam of hope, "that the princess went away to marry the prince; and there isn't a prince, is there?"

She blushed and shook her head.

"I'm afraid there is a prince too, Dick; and the worst of it is, he isn't the right one."

"And is he coming too?" he asked.

"I'm afraid he is."

"Well, I wouldn't go with him, that's all," he said hotly. "You just stay with us till the right one comes and you and I know who he is, you bet we do," he added meaningly. "The princess never married the wrong one in the stories, did she?"

"But it doesn't always come out in real life as it does in the stories," she replied blushing in spite of herself. "I wish it did though—I wish it did."

The sound of a cooee came in through the open door.

"It's Mr. Leicester," said Dick excitedly; "I know his voice."

"Let us go and see what he wants," said Marjorie, quickly going to the cracked mirror that hung in the kitchen above the wash-basin and putting both hands to her hair to straighten out any rebellious strands that in her hurried dressing had escaped attention. Hand in hand, they went out the back door together to find Keith standing holding Puck by the bridle rein. The pony was pawing the ground in impatience to get at the tempting grass on which myriads of dewdrops were sparkling in the morning sun. The air was fragrant with the smell of clover and the roses that climbed over the back porch of the little cottage.

Keith, himself, was in his shirtsleeves and wearing his rough ranch clothes, but he looked fresh and fit; and the little bay had been groomed until his skin shone like satin and all traces of his hard journey had disappeared. His long tail had been brushed until it hung out with all the wavy magnificence of that of a general's charger and the dainty, little hoofs had had a touch of tar.

Keith lifted his hat to Marjorie and said good-morning. Her eyes thanked him but they quickly fell before his and she turned to Dick who was gazing as if spellbound at Puck.

"This is the bay horse with the long tail that your fairy godmother was to bring you, Dicky," she said; "and you must thank Mr. Leicester for grooming it so finely."

The boy tried to speak but his emotions were too much for him; and Keith took pity on his confusion.

"Come, you must let Miss Colquhoun see how well you can ride him," he said; and he lifted him into the saddle. "I shortened the stirrups for you and I think they're all right for these legs of yours. Now, off

you go down the road. He's not fresh enough to run away with you to-day; but after he's rested up a little, he'll soon show you his mettle."

Puck started as soon as he felt his little rider in the saddle; and they were off at a brisk trot round the house and down the road. The two left behind walked slowly after him.

"There goes happiness unalloyed; but I haven't asked you how you are feeling after your arduous day yesterday?" said Keith turning to Marjorie with a more intimate air.

"A little tired," she confessed, meeting his eyes for a moment and then quickly turning away with an odd feeling of constraint. "I dread the ordeal before me," and she looked out North to the sky-line with its peak upon peak stretching like a great rampart athwart the sky, an intense blue but flecked with fleecy clouds that cast their soft shadows on the timber-clad slopes. The Golden Ears and the higher peaks still bore their garnishing of snow in sharp contrast to the summery glades about them. Down the narrow lane through the alder wood, Puck and his rider were gradually growing smaller. Birds were chirruping and bees buzzed around sipping honey from the purple fireflower and the clover blossoms. It was such a day as made one glad to be alive.

"I feel as a schoolboy might," she said, "when on a morning like this he had to go to school when he might be going fishing. I should like to take Puck and ride off to the hills out yonder and get away from all my worries; but I am afraid I'll have to go to school after all," she added with a sigh.

Keith's heart thumped alarmingly against the walls of his chest; and he felt that his good resolutions of the night before were likely to be broken. He took a sidelong

glance at her profile as she gazed longingly towards the distant mountains, marking the eager poise of the head on the ivory neck, the red lips slightly parted over the proud, little chin and the glint of the sunlight in the coppery gold of her hair where it curled about the shell-like ear. It reminded him of a bird in a cage that was pining to be free and his heart went out in sympathy.

"You should at least tell her and take your chances," it prompted.

"And repent it for the rest of your life," sneered his pride.

"You can, at least, afford to keep her in comfort," was the quick reply; "and what has money to say on a day like this. If she loves you what else matters; and it is now, if ever, that she needs you."

"You remember what happened before. There are her relatives to consider; and they would never consent that she should bury herself out here," said Pride with a justness that could not be gainsaid. He thought of Patricia and his heart abandoned the fight. Ruthlessly he crushed down the longing to take her in his arms.

"You'll find it will not be so bad after all," he said to her consolingly; but his words sounded to him banal and insincere. A constraint like a wet blanket had fallen upon him. She turned towards him with a brave, little smile, but it was not a happy one.

"I daresay not," she replied. "Here comes Dicky back again at full speed. I shall have to go inside now and take Mrs. Bolton her breakfast."

CHAPTER XXXIV

The urchin checked his foaming steed
And an eldritch laugh laughed he:
Who dares to follow where I lead
A woful fate maun dree.

OLD BALLAD.

ABOUT two hours after Dick had enjoyed his first ride on his fairy godmother's gift, a large touring automobile drew up in front of Jamieson's general store at Portlake. In the back seat sat Lord and Lady Angleside, the former looking very bored and weary and the latter leaning back on the cushions with an air of grim determination that heightened even the natural severity of her patrician features. Her heavy eyebrows above a pair of piercing grey eyes and a long aquiline nose over a small thin-lipped mouth made up a combination awe-inspiring, indeed, when her Ladyship was in a temper and one that Lord Angleside himself was as much in terror of as any housemaid or footman at the family seat.

It was her Ladyship's practice when about to admonish any culprit who had been unfortunate enough to incur her anger, to extend the sphere of her displeasure so as to take in the innocent members of her family circle; as she felt a certain amount of consolation in venting it upon all and sundry whether guilty or not. Her tactics had this advantage, that it was to everybody's distinct benefit to see that no one was allowed to do anything to ruffle or annoy her.

This morning, her poor husband, during the two hours that it had taken them to come from Vancouver, in spite of all the freshness of the morning air and the beauty and novelty of the scenery, had not had, by any means, a pleasant time of it. Her Ladyship was on a punitive expedition and her wrath had been gathering momentum, so to speak, ever since the ship had left her dock at Liverpool. In her worst throes of sea-sickness and amid the discomforts of the long journey by rail, she had consoled herself time and again with the anticipation of her meeting with Marjorie and the things that she would say to her. She had looked forward, too, to the return journey with the weeping captive in her train when she would have still further opportunity for disciplining the once docile girl who had so set at naught her authority, and made of her a laughing stock in the set where she had held her head so high. Strange to say, too, these thoughts of vengeance held a far stronger place in her mind than the satisfaction of her long cherished ambition to see Wilfrid master of the Colquhoun estates and married to the girl who was their necessary appanage.

Upon Wilfrid and Miss Devereux who sat in front, her Ladyship's glacial gaze, seeing that it only fell upon their backs, had had small effect; and the two were enjoying each other's society immensely. Neither Lord nor Lady Angleside had intended that the young woman should have been of the party at all that morning; but, somehow or other, it had come about that she had been invited. Whether it was the hints that she let drop as to the loneliness that she would feel in their absence or whether Wilfrid was anxious to have her with them, at any rate it was so arranged much to the disgust of Lord Angleside. Like a true Britisher, more than anything else, he detested a scene; and he was looking forward with serious

misgivings to the errand before them. It was purely a family matter, he felt, and to have any outsider with them, no matter how intimate, was bound to increase the unpleasantness of the situation. Lady Angleside had acquiesced, however, and Patricia had not worried herself over the slight dryness which had been evident in the manner of his Lordship.

Jamieson, the storekeeper, had just brought out a package to a small boy on a bay pony who rode off slowly as they drove up, looking back over his shoulder, however, with apparent curiosity at the handsome car and its smartly dressed occupants.

"I wonder if you could tell us," said Wilfrid to the storekeeper, "how we must go to get to a place owned by a man called Bolton. We were told it was about four miles east of Portlake."

"That's quite right," the man replied; "but I don't exactly know myself just where you have to turn off the main road. I think you have to go about three miles first. That's Bolton's boy that just left here though and if you were to ask him he could tell you all right. He's on his way home now."

Wilfrid thanked him and told the chauffeur to drive on and overtake the boy who had now started off up the hill at a sharp canter so that it was a little while before the car was able to come alongside of him. He pulled up his horse as Wilfrid called to him and the car was brought to a standstill.

"Could you show us the way to Mr. Bolton's place, my boy?" asked the latter.

Dick turned upon them a face that was sullen with anger and grief. Marjorie had sent him on an errand to the store to give him an excuse for a ride; and in the delight of his new acquisition, he had forgotten all about

the conversation of the morning in which she had told him that her friends would come for her. When he saw the motor drive up to the store, however, the suspicion had flashed on him that these must be they and now their question made him sure of it. They would take her away and he knew that she did not want to go. Even the possession of his pony could never make up for a disaster like that; and to contemplate life without Marjorie was to open up a vista that looked very drear and uninviting indeed.

"No, I won't show you the way either," he burst out fiercely, his shrill treble keyed a note or two higher than usual; "you can find it yourself if you want. I know fine what you're after; but you can't have her I tell you. She knows you're coming all right and she doesn't want you, so you might as well go back." He paused for a moment but, further words failing him, he pressed his little heels into Puck's sleek sides and was off at the full gallop.

"The little spitfire!" exclaimed Lady Angleside forgetting her dignity in her astonishment; "what on earth can he mean?"

"Most extraordinary!" said his Lordship, in the lazy drawl that was habitual to him; "it looks as if our coming has been heralded abroad. Anyway we'd better follow the youngster as well as we can and if we can keep him in sight, he shall be our guide in spite of himself."

"Funny little beggar, you know," said Wilfrid to Patricia. "His voice was positively shaking with passion. Marjorie has got wind of us somehow and the little chap has constituted himself her protector. It's a rum layout altogether. Mother," he continued, turning round with a grin towards the back seat, "that's one, I doubt, that isn't going to let you have all your own way."

Lady Angleside's aristocratic nose quivered. She drew herself back but she uttered not a word; and the rest kept a judicious silence as the car sped on in the wake of the flying horseman.

CHAPTER XXXV

"Beshrew me, but my wives jestes grow too bitter;
Plainer speeches for her were more fitter:
Malice lies inbowelled in her tongue,
And new hatcht hate makes every jest a wrong."
HENRY PORTER—*Old Play.*

MARJORIE was sitting with Mrs. Bolton in the sitting room when Dick came bursting in, in a state of wild excitement, to announce the approach of the party in the automobile. She had confided to her old nurse the full story of her adventures in Vancouver and her expectation that Lord and Lady Angleside would be calling upon them before the day was out, and they had just been discussing the problem that the situation presented. Marjorie found a certain amount of relief in telling her troubles to the older woman who in her childhood had shown her all a mother's care. The latter, herself, was greatly disturbed not only out of sympathy for the girl but for more selfish considerations as, since her coming, she had learned to depend upon her completely, sickness having incapacitated her from her household duties. To lose Marjorie at the present time before she had fully recovered her health would be a very serious consideration. Besides this, however, she was filled with consternation at the prospect of facing Lady Angleside while filling the rôle of one who had given shelter to the runaway. True enough, she was no longer in her Ladyship's employ but for years she had been, and had learned to quail before her frown. The old terror she found, even after all these years, was quick of revival.

Marjorie, however, was quite cool and collected albeit

a trifle pale; and to quiet Dicky's excitement, she sent him out to stable his horse. In a minute or two they heard the auto come to a stand outside and a knock came to the door, not a shy or a retiring knock but a peremptory knock that would admit of no delay. Mrs. Bolton opened it to disclose Lady Angleside with Lord Angleside in her rear, the former with eyes alert and eager and head thrown back like a falcon about to strike and the latter with an air apologetic and plainly profoundly uncomfortable.

"So it was you after all, Smithers?" she said grimly after a moment's pause in which her keen eyes seemed to pierce through the shrinking woman before her. Smithers had been Mrs. Bolton's maiden name.

"Will your Ladyship be pleased to enter?" said the latter, rallying her scattered faculties; "and your Lordship?" she added, making an attempt at a courtesy to the latter who had followed his spouse into the room.

"How d'ye do?" he began and was about to say more when his wife stopped him with a warning frown. He subsided at once into the chair placed for him, taking no notice of his ward who had risen to her feet on their entry. This was a matter that had to be fought out between the women themselves he told himself; and he felt aggrieved that his wife had considered it necessary that he should be dragged in to look on at the distressing spectacle. It went to his heart to have to treat his ward so coldly even in spite of the way she had left them; but to recognise the culprit by any show of kindliness under the eyes of his wife was something that was altogether too much for his hardihood. His was a humiliating part; but he had played it before and it had now lost some of its bitterness.

Lady Angleside refused to sit down but stood staring at Marjorie, who had risen and was standing with her

back to the wall of the little room, her face very pale and tense as she waited to see what her Ladyship's attitude would be towards her. She was ready to greet her affectionately if only she was allowed; but she had enough spirit to resist any attempt to treat her as a wrong-doer. She felt justified in the course she had taken; and although her heart was beating fast with nervousness and she was half sick with depression and distaste for the ordeal before her, she still held a brave front ready alike for either kindness or contumely. Her Ladyship's first words, however, were not such as to reassure her.

"Well, young woman," she boomed out in her most scathing tones; "what have you got to say for yourself, eh? A pretty dance you have led us all, haven't you?"

She was a tall woman of a goodly girth and with her big motor cloak and high black bonnet with its nodding plumes, she seemed to tower above Marjorie with her slim, girlish figure in its simple white muslin. His Lordship, glancing askance at the pair, could not help comparing them, from recollections of cocking mains enjoyed in his youth, to a pair of roosters as he had seen them, an old bird fully developed in all the pride of his strength pitted against some delicate-limbed cockerel, graceful and lissome, full of pluck and fire but without the weight and the muscle of his antagonist. Marjorie, for all her inward tumult, now wore an air of defiance that was as fuel to the elder woman's rage. When she spoke, her voice trembled but it was not with fear.

"Why have you followed me then?" she asked. "I have been happy here."

Her Ladyship smiled a bitter smile.

"Happy! I daresay," she said ironically looking round at the humble room with a glance of scorn, "but if so, it is all the more shame to you. How dare you bring us all

to shame with your disgraceful conduct? How dare you play fast and loose with my son, Wilfrid, who worshipped the very ground you walked on?"

"I was sorry about Wilfrid," said Marjorie; "but I could not help it. You should not have tried to make me marry him when I didn't want to. He never made love to me anyhow; and I felt sure he would soon get over my going away."

"Never was in love with you!" her Ladyship exclaimed in a burst of wrath. "Pray did you expect him to hug you like a village wench? I never heard of such talk. To think that after all we had done for you—treated you like our own child—that you should bring upon us all this scandal and disgrace. The wedding actually announced and the gifts coming in and all that, and to run off like a—like a—like a factory-girl," she concluded somewhat lamely after pausing in vain to find a comparison that would do justice to her contempt.

"Tut, tut, Sophy," said his Lordship in his leisurely manner, feeling it impossible to remain silent any longer; "you'll never do any good by carrying on this way. The fact is, Marjorie," he said, looking for the first time at his ward, "we're willing to let bygones be bygones if you'll come along home with us. We know that young girls are apt to be a bit er—er—well, flighty, we'll say—kick over the traces, you know—and all that, before they settle down. Wilfrid doesn't bear you any grudge, you know, and he's out in the car now. Your Aunt's a bit severe, of course; but she doesn't really mean it, I'm sure."

Her Ladyship had stared at her husband during this speech, mute with astonishment and resentment.

"Indeed, then, Reginald, I mean every word of it," she burst out, "and I can tell you that unless my young lady here displays a very different temper, she doesn't

go home with me or have anything more to do with my son. She can stay with Smithers till Doomsday if she likes." Here she turned the vials of her wrath upon poor Mrs. Bolton who had been standing trembling with fear during this harangue. "And what right had you, I should like to know," she burst out with withering scorn, "to receive a runaway from my house—a minor if you please, too—and give her countenance in her wrong-doing when you should have sent her back to me at once. I could have you put in gaol for it, and I've a mind to, I tell you;" and she glared fiercely at the poor woman, who was terrified by the outburst.

"Never you mind her, Nursie," said Marjorie running to her side and putting her arm protectingly around the older woman; "she shan't do anything to you."

"Indeed, then, my Lady," said Mrs. Bolton, her courage coming back to her; "I'm sure I meant no harm, but I'd do it again if the child were to come to me that way; for I'm sure she's as dear to me as she is to you. Many's the time that I have sat by her when she was sick and comforted her; and me just a girl myself at the time. Real homesick I was when I first came to the Hall and it was just a comfort to me when the little girl, as she then was, was given me to take care of. Now, my Lady, I love her just as much as I do my own little Dick an' that's saying a mighty good deal I'm thinking. We poor folks has hearts just as much as you rich folks—aye more I may well say," she said defiantly, gathering courage as she went on, "an' do you think that I was going to turn her out when she came to me in her trouble?"

"Reginald, will you order this impertinent creature from the room? It shows what this vaunted democratic spirit does for our servant classes when they come out here," said her Ladyship, lowering her lorgnette through

which she had been regarding Mrs. Bolton, while the latter was speaking, as if she was some natural curiosity. "I did not come here to be insulted."

"I hardly see how I can do that, Sophy," said his Lordship, with some show of irritation, "seeing it's the woman's own house. I don't very well see how she could have acted otherwise—except, of course," he added, "that she ought to have let us know that Marjorie was here."

"That's right, of course; take the woman's part. It's just like you; and I suppose you'll be saying the girl was in the right too," she snapped out angrily, throwing herself into a chair.

"No, I won't go so far as that, you know," was the reply in a tone of apology; "but I always think it is a mistake to try to make a match by force. You can lead a maid—ah, to the brink—to the brink of matrimony, you know, but you can't always make her jump. I often thought Marjorie might turn out—ah, a bit skittish if you didn't, ah—rein her with a light hand on the bridle"; and his Lordship gave a near approach to a chuckle but sobered instantly as he saw the storm deepening on the face of his lady.

"I wish you would not use these vulgar, horsey metaphors," she said acidly; "and since you will not make this woman retire I'll have to do it myself. Marjorie must settle this matter with me now once and for all, so you might as well go, Smithers."

"'Deed, my Lady, I'd be only too pleased to make myself scarce if I saw you were kindly to the poor girl," said Mrs. Bolton with some spirit; "but leave her alone to be tormented I simply will not," and, folding her arms, she stared back defiantly at her former mistress, her awe swallowed up in her championship.

"Hoity, toity, madam, you needn't take that line with me," said her Ladyship, now white with wrath. "You think she has money and that you'll come in for a share of it. You're vastly mistaken though, for, unless she behaves herself and comes back with me now, I'll see that she doesn't get a penny of it—not one penny," she repeated emphatically, punctuating the words by rapping on the table with her knuckles. "What's that boy doing here?" she snapped out, pointing to Dick, who had slipped in unnoticed and was standing in the doorway to the kitchen, his little face white with fear as he listened to the high words that were passing and saw that both his mother and Marjorie seemed to be the objects of them.

"Dick, leave the room immediately," said his mother speaking sharply in her state of nervous excitement; "how dare you come in when there are visitors present!"

"It simply amounts to this, Marjorie," Lady Angleside continued as soon as the boy had vanished, "since it's evident that we are not to have a chance to talk this matter over in private, that you must make your choice now. Either you must come home with us—and Wilfrid is out in the car willing to take you back in spite of the way he has been treated, poor boy,—or you must stay here with Bolton for good. But if you have a conscience it should sting you for making shipwreck of a good man's love," she concluded with a touch of pathos.

"If Wilfrid is so broken-hearted why doesn't he come in and tell me himself?" said Marjorie; and she moved over to the side of the room where she could see out the window. "He doesn't seem to be fretting very much at present," she said significantly after a hasty glance. "Who is the girl sitting beside him, by the way?" she asked with apparent innocence.

Lady Angleside frowned and bit her lip. It was just like Wilfrid to spoil all the effect of her oratory.

"I would not allow him to come in until I learned whether you would prove amenable to reason," she replied sternly. "I see it is useless to look for any obedience or proper feeling in you, however. One might have expected some slight sense of your duty after all we have done for you."

"I think Wilfrid might have come in to see me at least," Marjorie burst out, her mood softening at once at the reproach. "I don't want to seem undutiful, Auntie, but I can't go back unless you give up the idea of this marriage to Wilfrid. We wouldn't be happy together."

"That's all nonsense! Why you were made for each other; and a better-natured boy than Wilfrid would be hard to find. If you knew what some men are like," she went on darkly, "you, perhaps, wouldn't be so particular. But there is no need to prolong the discussion any farther, so say what you are going to do."

Marjorie looked a moment into the cold, grey eyes fixed implacably upon her and at the thin lips pressed obstinately together; she looked at Lord Angleside who sat with his arm over the chairback playing with his gloves. He was evidently uneasy. She felt that his pose was not hostile at least; but she longed for a word or two of kindness from him. It cut her to the heart to be treated so coldly by them all; and just a word would have brought her to him in tears, if not of repentance, at least of affection and sorrow. But the word did not come. She looked again out of the window and saw Wilfrid apparently chatting away gaily with the girl beside him. This last decided her and her mouth set in lines of determination.

"No, Auntie," she said; "I cannot go with you on the

condition you would require—I cannot," she repeated passionately but in tones of weariness and dejection. "I had rather stay with Bolton here if she will let me."

"Very well, then," said Lady Angleside rising; "that, of course, settles the matter. Come, Reginald;" and without another word, she went to the door, opened it herself and stalked out. Lord Angleside got up, too, and looking to see that his wife was out of hearing, he said in low tones:

"Tut, tut, Marjorie, too bad! But she'll come round yet all right, don't you worry. You'll see us again before we go back. Of course, that was all nonsense, too, about not getting your money. Neither she nor I have any power over that except to look after it till you are of age. I'll send you a draft as soon as I get back. Don't worry now, there's a good child; it'll come all right yet. Yes, coming, my dear, coming at once," he called out as with a wave of his hand that took in both his ward and Mrs. Bolton, he hurried off after the motor.

CHAPTER XXXVI

When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state.

SHAKESPEARE.

It was with a feeling of heart-sickness and despair that Marjorie listened to the sound of the motor as it died away amongst the trees carrying off those who had been her own people ever since she could remember. They were leaving her in anger and it might well be that the breach would never be healed; and justify herself as she might, she could not get rid of the feeling that she was perhaps at fault. Lady Angleside's words, no matter how unfair Marjorie had felt them to be at the time, remained to rankle and to sting. She felt, however, that it would never do to let Mrs. Bolton see her depression, so she mustered as cheerful a face as she could and did her best to assume her normal manner. The older woman, even in spite of Marjorie's apparent unconcern, was almost inconsolable; and the latter had difficulty in rallying her out of the nervousness and depression into which Lady Angleside's visit had thrown her. This yielded, finally, however, to Marjorie's cheery persuasion and after the midday meal was over, she consented to lie down and sleep for a while.

This left the girl free to indulge her own sorrow except for Dick, whose clear eyes had refused to be deluded by her counterfeit cheerfulness. He knew her too well not to see by several little signs of voice and manner that the

scene of the morning had not passed over her so lightly as her manner would indicate. Besides, had he not heard those terrible words that the angry, old lady had spoken before he had been ignominiously sent away, words that threatened not only banishment for Marjorie, but the loss of all her fortune as well. Selfish considerations as to whether Marjorie was to go or stay had been forgotten; and the boy's loyal heart held now only one feeling which was that of concern for her whom he loved and who would now be no princess at all but merely a beggar maid if the old lady carried out her threat. Dick was convinced from what he had seen of her that she would. Marjorie had, therefore, been conscious of the boy's hazel eyes following her anxiously everywhere. They were like those of some faithful dog that senses its master's calamity, awaiting the first opportunity to fawn on and comfort him wherever he goes. So to get rid of him she retired to her bedroom; but finding the confinement of the house unbearable, instead of remaining there she jumped out of the little low window and was soon walking quickly but noiselessly down the shady trail that led to the creek.

There was a little natural bower on a level shelf of mossy sward cut into the bank, which looked right out upon the falls, that Dick and she had discovered. On all but the creek side, it was surrounded by a close curtain of vines above the earthen walls that were tapestried thick with five-fingered ferns; and it was an ideal retreat, cool and fragrant on a warm, summer day, in which to while away an hour or two in reading or reflection. Marjorie loved to sit in it whether in company with Dick or alone with a book and listen to the never-ceasing thunder of the falls. It was here that she fled almost instinctively to be alone with her unhappiness; and once secure within its shady solitude, her pent-up feelings overwhelmed her

and, casting herself down prone on the mossy floor, she gave way to a paroxysm of sobbing.

However, she had not escaped the watchfulness of the faithful Dick as she had fondly imagined. An admirer and imitator of the methods of the Deerslayer was not to be so easily eluded as that; and Dick had followed her at a safe distance taking cover with all the skill of a redskin in a story-book. He had heard of people making away with themselves from grief and he was resolved that he would not let Marjorie out of his sight until at least the first shock of hers was past. He would stalk her cautiously, he told himself and then discover himself to her with an Indian war-whoop. This, he argued, would undoubtedly tend to cheer her, for Marjorie was always ready to enter into the fun of the game.

So he watched her trip lightly down the earthen steps that he had hewn out of the bank with his hatchet and reinforced with spars of vine maple; and then he crawled noiselessly after her. He did this noiselessly, from instinct rather than necessity, for the roar of the waters would have drowned almost any sound less than a cannon shot.

But when at last he was close enough to see Marjorie stretched out upon the ground, her face hidden in her hands and her limp figure quivering with the violence of her sobs, all thought of the game vanished before this visible evidence of her distress. It was brought home to him perhaps for the first time in his short existence, the helplessness of the mere male before a woman in tears. He felt now that he had done wrong to follow, that he had intruded on something sacred, something that it was not for him to see; and he fled, discomfited and ashamed.

As he sped down the trail along the creek hardly knowing whither he went, he suddenly came upon Keith, sit-

ting on a mossy log beside the stream with his fishing rod on the ground beside him, and Cæsar lying at his feet.

"Whither away looking so woebegone, Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance?" Keith called out with a smile.

Dick smiled back, a wan, little smile and went to sit down beside Cæsar, who greeted him affectionately by licking his cheek and presenting his paw to be shaken. He did not reply but gravely shook the dog's paw and put his arm around him.

"What's the matter, Dick?" pursued Keith struck by the boy's evident dejection. "I thought you would have been off having a ride on Puck. You haven't lamed him or let him down already have you?"

"No," said Dick with a sudden gleam of brightness which at once died away, "'tain't that."

"It's not your Mother sick again, is it?"

"No, Mother's all right; but she's worried about Marjorie and so am I."

Keith's heart gave a leap.

"Why, what's the matter with Marjorie?" he asked; "she was all right this morning."

"Her folks were here in a motor after you left—awful swells they are too," replied Dick in tones of awe mingled with disgust and dejection; "and they've gone off and left her for ever and they're going to take away her fortune from her."

"What's that you say, Dick?" said Keith jumping to his feet in his eagerness. "They're to take away her fortune! Are you sure?"

"That's what they said anyway, for I was in and heard them," Dick maintained gloomily. "Oh, they are awful mad at her."

"But they couldn't do that surely. I thought the money was left to her."

"Yes, it's true enough for Marjorie's all broke up about it. She's crying like anything, and she ain't one to cry over nothing."

"Where is she now, Dick? Is she at the house?"

Dick hesitated.

"No, she ain't at the house. I don't think I ought to tell. It's a secret between us two and nobody else can find it."

"But I should like to see her, Dick," said Keith. "In fact I must see her," he declared earnestly. "I might be able to comfort her, you know."

Dick's face brightened a little but he shook his head.

"Nobody can do that just now, I guess; she's too bad. I think she wants to be alone."

"We both love her, Dick, now don't we, and we both want to help her if we can. Now I think maybe I can. I have something important to say to her, Dick; and I want to see her."

He spoke persuasively, but with a masterful air; and Dick assented, although to judge by his face, with some misgivings.

"Well," he said: "I'll show you. She's in 'Marjorie's Bower!' It's right near here. It's a swell place too," he boasted; and his face became more hopeful. After all he had great faith in Keith; and if any one could cheer Marjorie, he could, he told himself.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Fair Iris and her swain
Were in a shady bower;
Where Thyrsis long in vain,
Had sought the shepherd's hour.

DRYDEN.

"If you are not the heiress born,
And I," said he, "the lawful heir,
We two will wed to-morrow morn
And you shall still be Lady Clare."

TENNYSON.

MARJORIE had just time to sit up and hastily compose her disordered locks and smooth out her dress when Keith pushed aside the curtain of bracken and entered her sanctum. He had halloed in warning and had waited a few minutes; and now, it was with fast-beating heart and much trepidation that he found himself gazing down into her tear-bedimmed eyes which regarded him with considerable show at least of indignation. He hastened to excuse himself.

"Forgive me, Marjorie, for the interruption," he said, using her Christian name in his earnestness; "but I had something special to say to you that would not wait."

He forgot the noise of the falls, however, and as he spoke low Marjorie heard scarce a word of it. She saw that he was speaking, however, and something in his expression tended to dispel her annoyance. She spoke the words that were already on her lips all the same.

"I thought I would be private here," she said; "but it seems I was mistaken."

The sound of her voice was carried away by the noise

of the waters. Keith put his hand to his ear and she smiled in spite of herself as she saw the action, and then he smiled in sympathy. Her momentary anger vanished in that smile, and she knew that she was glad to see him.

"I see I must come close to you," he said coming nearer this time, "if I am to make myself heard above the envious waters," and he sat down beside her. "I lost what you said; but I gathered from your expression that I was intruding."

"My face, I fear, spoke the truth," said Marjorie drawing herself ever so slightly away.

"The Spirit of the Stream is always elusive, and if one would ever speak with her, one must seize one's opportunity when one has the chance," quoth Keith hardily in her ear.

"When one is so presumptuous, one deserves to be rebuffed," she said with an affectation of severity, and her face was still turned away.

"I had something very special to say, and I could not wait a moment to say it; and that is why I dared break in on you in this way."

He spoke close enough to her ear so that, though his tone was low, it was still loud enough in spite of the roaring of the water. She was frightened now and womanlike she tried to temporise.

"How did you find me?" she wondered. "That plaguey Dicky——" she began.

"Is an angel without the wings," finished Keith; "and he loves you, Marjorie, almost as much as I do. Thank Heaven, though, I have the start of him—in years, at least!"

She had withdrawn her gaze now from the white water in front of them, and was looking down, her long lashes sweeping her cheek that was mantled with a soft flush of

colour. Her arms were bare to the elbow, and her two little hands lay clasped in her lap, white against the dark green of her dress—it was the same she had worn the Sunday afternoon that Keith had surprised her fishing on the log.

"Marjorie," Keith went on and his voice that was not wont to fail him was husky and his tongue seemed to have tied itself in knots. "I've only a very modest income and this ranch, that isn't very profitable as yet at least, and I couldn't keep you in the style you've been accustomed to; but I'd work it twice as hard if I had you to work for."

He felt he was doing it badly for she said not a word; and now her face was turned away a little and he only had a meagre profile. One hand was plucking nervously at her gown and involuntarily his closed over it. It was not drawn away, which he took for a happy omen.

"I know it's not much to offer you after what you have been accustomed to," he continued. "Miss Devereux told me at the hotel last night that you were to be rich, and that made it impossible for me to speak."

"How should that make any difference?" said Marjorie, but without turning her head.

"Oh, well, one would not wish to be suspected of being a fortune-hunter, you know," Keith answered somewhat at a loss.

"But I thought that love should triumph over all barriers," she remarked.

"Theoretically it should," he assented; "but, in practice, it does not. Happily though that is now a question of the abstract and we'd better leave it alone."

"I do not understand," she faltered, at a loss to fathom his meaning. "Is it any different now from last night," and her eyes were on him gravely questioning.

He hesitated in some confusion.

"Well, Dicky just told me that you had lost all your fortune; and so I came to you at once. Do not send me away, Marjorie."

Her eyes softened but she quickly cast them down again. So, he had come to her now that he thought she was penniless.

"But did you never think a girl might have her pride and her self-respect, too," she asked—"that she might refuse to give herself as a beggar, where she would have been glad to surrender both herself and her fortune as well—always supposing she did return your love," she added softly.

"It is different for a woman," said Keith. "If she gives her love, she gives her all; and what does it matter whether she has money-bags or not?"

"A man has a right to his pride," she said a trifle bitterly; "but a woman has none, it appears. Isn't it a poor love that would baulk at money-bags, no matter on which side they happened to be? If I were t-t-to g-g-get another fortune to-morrow, I suppose——"

Her voice had a catch in it and she turned her head away to try to hide her emotion. The appeal that lay in her distress was too strong for Keith to resist and he had her in his arms almost before he was aware of it.

"It wouldn't make a bit of difference, I'd love you just the same," he said.

Half an hour later when Dicky who had been watching near the entrance to the bower with the patient pertinacity of a Mohawk on the warpath, saw them emerge, there was that in their loverlike pose that satisfied him that his dearest wish had come true. He was wise enough to see that they had no need of his company so with a mind that was now at ease, he dashed off through the bush to saddle Puck for a ride before supper.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"O hasten now, my mistress dere,"
The little page did cry;
"For fast behind my weary feet
The foemen hither hie."

OLD BALLAD.

THE next morning, Dick, who had gone over to Mr. Leicester's to borrow a crowbar for his father, returned with a letter for Marjorie.

"Guess what I've got for you," he cried with a grin, holding aloft the missive as she came out on the back porch in answer to his call.

"Have you caught some trout for breakfast?" she asked, pretending not to see what he was waving although the eager sparkle of her eye and the blush of pleasure that crimsoned her cheek, belied the imposture.

"Aw, you know fine," he protested; "but I ain't goin' to give it to you if you can't guess," and the letter was promptly withdrawn behind his back.

The dire threat was effective and Marjorie capitulated at once.

"Oh, I'll be good, Dicky," she said cajolingly; "I know what it is. It's a letter from Mr. Leicester. Give it to me, do, there's a good boy."

"Say, Marjorie, promise not to be offended and I'll tell you what he called me. I've got a new name now."

"What is it, Dicky?" she asked impatiently.

"Ah, but you must promise though."

"But I do!" she assured him.

"Sure, though?" he persisted; "'cos mind, I ain't goin' to run any risks."

"Cross my heart, hope to die!" she asseverated solemnly.

"I'm Mercuree," he said proudly, "'cos I'm to carry the messages of the gods—that's between him and you. He says I must take the invis'ble wings off my shoulders an' put 'em on my feet. That's to make me run fast; and he gave me a quarter," he added joyfully, coming down on a sudden from the fanciful to the real. "Say," he went on coaxingly, "d'ye think Mother would let me ride Puck down to Portlake for the mail after dinner if I work most awfully hard? You ask her, please, won't you?" and the hazel eyes pleaded eloquently.

"You don't deserve to be called Mercury,—molasses would be fitter I am thinking," she scolded; "for here you've kept my letter from me all this time. You'd better hand it over, young man, before you ask for favours."

This time, there was no delay and, after promising to grant his plea, she fled with it to her room where she might read it in privacy. The writing was as follows:

Dearest Lady of High Degree:—

Your humble squire begs of you to meet him at the crossing of the creek at two this afternoon whence he would fain take you to see his humble cottage. He is convinced that, lowly as it is, your presence will convert it into a palace of happiness.

Yours counting the intervening minutes,

KEITH.

So it was that two o'clock found her at the appointed spot. Keith was there to meet her; and they walked together up the bank and through the orchard to the garden that surrounded the house. It was a lovely summer

afternoon with a sky of cloudless blue and the air was full of the whirr and buzz of insect life. The call of the cock-pheasant sounded out clear and shrill at frequent intervals. A grouse-hen started almost from beneath their feet with a great show of terror, trailing a drooping wing to lure them from the vicinity of her brood; but they were wrapped up in each other and paid little heed to aught else.

"I wanted you to see my little house," said Keith as they came to the garden gate, that opened from the orchard into the garden. "It seems strange to think you have never been in it."

"You forget the night that I arrived," she said mischievously, "when you handed me over to Mrs. Dalrymple in the kitchen with such an air."

"Spare me the remembrance," he begged. "I burn with shame whenever I think of it. What an opportunity I had and I threw it away! What blind fools we men are apt to be anyway," he exclaimed bitterly, turning his head away in vexation.

"Oh, I didn't mean to vex you," she said with quick contrition when she saw that he was really hurt. Her little hand sought his and as he clasped it he turned to face her and drew her towards him with a sudden access of feeling, looking down upon her very tenderly.

"My dear," he said, "whatever of a prig I may have been to you, I shall never betray the trust that you have shown in me now. With your love you have given me your all as well; for a reconciliation now with your relatives will be out of the question. I hope I am not selfish in not wishing for it; but I want you all to myself, and I am jealous of any who would want to share you, or to come between us."

"Keith——" she hesitated for a moment over the name,

"Keith, dear, there is no one can come between us now; for I love you and you love me and the world outside may go as it will."

Their lips met in a kiss; and for a short space they stood clasped in each other's arms, forgetful of everything but the rapture of the moment. For Marjorie, the worry and stress of the past week was forgotten and she was enjoying the luxury of feeling that she had some one whom she loved on whom she might lean for support. Keith, on the other hand, was revelling in the sense of his new-found happiness that had come to him so suddenly after he had, from a prompting of pride or of duty or of both, given up hope that she might be his.

They passed through into the garden and perhaps to cover the depth of his emotions, for he had to a great degree that extreme aversion to displaying them which is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon, Keith recurred to the topic that she had introduced.

"After all," he said with a chuckle, "come to think of it, if my attitude on that eventful evening was that of a prig, I think that you had quite the manner of a queen in melodrama. 'Unhand me, villain, she hissed,'—that sort of thing you know. Oh, it was quite terrible, I felt like a regular Don Juan."

It was her turn to wince but she made a charming moue.

"Oh, now, it was too dark to see how I looked and I didn't hiss at all," she protested. "But how cross you were! You simply seemed to radiate temper,—one could almost see the sparks."

"Shakespeare has described my peaceable disposition better than you," he said looking at her quizzically:

> "'*O* MARJORIE, *you are yoked with a lamb,*
> *That carries anger as the flint bears fire.*'"

he quoted. "The sparks could only have been evoked by extreme provocation, you see."

"Oh, if you must take refuge in Shakespeare, I am done," she laughed; "but what a beautiful, old-fashioned garden you have."

"I'm so glad that you like it," he said, becoming serious at once; "you see it was in a way my mother's garden. She sent me all the seeds for it; and I used to write her every week and tell her how the flowers were coming along. She had a plan of it and knew where everything was growing."

"Your mother is dead, then, is she?" she asked.

"Yes," he said; "she died last year. I have felt more lonely since then. Her weekly letters were a great pleasure to me; and just the knowing that some one cares, it makes all the difference."

"I know," she sympathised. "I can't think what I should have done without Dicky when I first came out. I was so homesick; but his loving little ways and his frank admiration acted like a tonic. I dared not let myself mope because I had to live up to his opinion of me."

"And now you have the two of us," he reminded her. "I ought really to be frightfully jealous of Dicky but I, too, have a great deal to thank him for. I still remember his delight when I first showed him this snapdragon," and he pointed to a fine plant of the old-fashioned flower. "He had never seen one before, and when I showed him how by pressing it with the fingers, it would eat like a rabbit he was enraptured. The fresh interest of a child is a beautiful thing."

"It has been delightful to me to see how he has simply absorbed all the fairy lore and the mythological stories that I have told him. His imagination seems to have

been starved before I came and now he appears to be making up for lost time. What do you think I caught him doing last week?"

"I give it up," said Keith.

"He had his father's old flute and was trying to play Orpheus to the cow."

"And did the charm work?" asked Keith smiling.

"Not at all and Dick was very disgusted. He expected Bossy to follow him home, charmed by his dulcet strains. Instead, there she stood chewing her cud and regarding him with a gaze of mild speculation and wonder and that was all. She watched him backing away from her with perfect indifference and soon turned to her browsing again.

" 'Of course, Orpheus was an extra fine player,' he said later in explanation. 'I guess Bossy might have come for him but she could hardly be expected to come for my tootling.' "

They walked round and inspected the sweet peas, columbines and Canterbury bells and all the other fine old favourites that filled the air with fragrance, and the beautiful climbing roses that covered the veranda. The house, which was of one story, stood on the brow of the slope and overlooked the apple orchard which, covering twenty acres or more, fell away gradually towards the creek canyon. Beyond, the alders formed a light green curtain against the darker hue of the firs and cedars and the blue mountain range in the distance.

The room into which Keith led Marjorie lay on the right of the hall, and the girl looked around it with interest as she sank into a big, leather Morris-chair by the side of the fireplace. The walls were finished with the natural cedar and were covered with pictures, photographs and magazine posters in a novel but delightful

medley. On either side of the big, brick fireplace were book-shelves of the same unvarnished cedar and the rich bindings of the books lent tone and colour to the room. Above them, a row of fine French prints were set into panelling beautifully grained and varnished over the natural wood.

"It is a lovely, homey sort of place," said Marjorie, contentedly, "in spite of its belonging to a bachelor. Books and pictures are the things that more than anything give individuality to a room. They are the silent witnesses to the owner's spiritual make-up, aren't they?" She was contrasting it in her mind with Wilfrid's at the Hall, the walls of which were ablaze with chorus-girls, actresses and race-horses.

"Yes, I'm rather fond of it myself, and it's good to find you like it. Of course, it lacks the feminine touch —but that," he declared with a bow, "is a defect that I hope will soon be remedied. Until then, when I sit here alone, I shall be dreaming like that chap in the picture there," and he pointed to a photogravure from "Life," representing a young man leaning back in an easy chair smoking at a comfortable fireside while in the vacant chair opposite is outlined the shadowy form of the lady of his dreams. "I shall be dreaming of you and of the time when you will be sitting there for keeps. There is no real reason for delay, is there?" he inquired anxiously.

"What about getting my guardian's consent?" she returned.

Keith's face fell.

"I thought he had departed for good," he replied; "and had cut you off with a shilling. The question has its delicate side," he went on smiling slyly; "but one would like to know whether in the eyes of the law you are still an infant, or whether you have reached that ripe and

august age of one-and-twenty when one is considered fit to be entrusted with one's destiny."

"Cannot you tell by my teeth?" she asked, smiling so as to show a charming, pearly mouthful. "Seriously, though," she went on more soberly and there was perhaps a shade of apprehension in her tone—she was thinking of her inheritance—"this is my twenty-first birthday."

Was it possible that it might still come between them? How would Keith take it when he found out the truth about it?

"Your birthday! Why didn't you tell me?" he cried; and had risen to attempt a demonstration in honour of the discovery when the door burst open with a bang and Dicky rushed breathless into the room, his eyes wide open with excitement.

"She's come after Marjorie! She'll be here in half a minute!" he cried to Keith. "You'd better run before she finds you," he urged, looking at Marjorie. "The old lady's in an awful temper."

"What are you talking about, Dick?" said Keith impatiently, by no means pleased to have his tête-à-tête broken up so unceremoniously and at such an inopportune moment. "You should know better than to rush into a room like this."

"It must be Aunt Sophronia, he means," Marjorie explained to Keith; "though, how ever she could have followed me here, I cannot understand."

"Yes, it's her," Dick nodded, turning from one to the other in his eagerness. "She left the motor half-way down the hill and walked up herself—ah, she's the foxy one all right; but I saw her an' I made Puck gallop all the way an' caught up to her just as she came to the top. She wa'n't too pleased to see me either by the way she looked at me."

"Where is she now then?" asked Keith impatiently. This was a most unexpected development and he was at a loss what to make of it. Marjorie had gone quite pale and he was vexed for her when he saw it.

"Ain't I just goin' to tell you?" said Dicky. "I thought you were most likely at the house so I sent her down to the old scarecrow down the field there."

"'Is this where Mr. Leicester lives?' says she.

"'Yes, ma'am,' says I. 'That looks like him down there in the strawberry patch if you want to see him.' 'Twasn't a lie, was it, 'cos it did look like you with your old coat and hat?" he pleaded with cheerful casuistry. "'Sides I wasn't goin' to have her catchin' you and taking you back home with her, was I, Marjorie? Gee! though," he added with a grin, "she'll be awful mad."

"Mrs. Bolton must have told her about our engagement," said Marjorie in dismay; "but she may not have told her that I am over here. She may just have come over to interview you."

"Well, now she's here we may as well face the music," said Keith cheerfully; "at any rate, she won't bite us. You had better withdraw to the dining-room," he suggested, rising and drawing apart the sliding doors that opened on the adjoining room. Marjorie hesitated for a moment and was about to demur; but there was a loud rap at the front door and panic seizing her, she slipped through without another word. Keith pulled the doors close again behind her and turned to open to his visitor.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The baron scanned the fateful scroll,
Then coloured red with shame;
For there on the dishonoured roll,
He read his daughter's name.

OLD BALLAD.

ON the evening of the day in which the Anglesides returned from Portlake, they went out for a walk together. Lady Angleside had been in a high state of temper all day and her spouse had proposed the walk thinking that it might do her good. On their return to the hotel, they stopped at the desk to get their key before going to their rooms. The clerk was busy for a short space and while waiting for him, Lord Angleside took the opportunity of looking over the names in the register and almost the first that he happened upon was that of his ward. He could not repress an exclamation of surprise at the sight of the familiar signature and his wife was soon made acquainted with the startling discovery.

"Why, that's most extraordinary!" she exclaimed looking at the date; "it's the day before yesterday and she told us nothing at all about it. And there's Mr. Leicester's name just above it; that's Patricia's friend."

"Very strange, indeed," said her husband. "I can't understand it either. We must ask the clerk about this."

The clerk, however, either could not or would not give any information as to Miss Colquhoun. She had certainly left the hotel but, as to just when, he was not prepared to

say. Perhaps the manager would be able to give them some information as he had had some conversation with the lady.

Lord Angleside would have left the matter over until the morning but his wife would not hear of it. Was the manager in and would he see them, she asked. The answer soon came back over the telephone that he would and they were ushered into his office. It was rather late to be sure, but a title is a good passport to favour; and it was with even more than his usual suavity that Mr. Graham received his visitors.

"Yes, I remember Miss Colquhoun quite well," he said when they had explained their errand; but his voice had a note of reserve in it. "Is she a friend of yours?" he asked.

He had formed a liking for the girl in spite of her unceremonious leavetaking of the night before; and, although appearances were against her, he felt by no means satisfied even yet as to her identity with the diamond-thief. Here, in his visitors, appeared a likely elucidation of the mystery; but at the same time, it behooved him to find out more about them before disclosing what he knew of the young lady.

"Well, as a matter of fact," replied Lord Angleside with just a trace of hesitation in his manner, "she is my ward." He felt the situation a trifle awkward and it went against the grain for him to be making enquiries of this kind from a stranger. If there had been anything irregular in Marjorie's conduct, it would not help matters to draw the hotel-man's attention to it. "She has been visiting friends in this country," he went on in explanation; "and we came out on a sort of surprise visit, you know, to join her. Naturally it somewhat astonished us to see her name in the register as we had no idea she was

in Vancouver, although she has been staying not far from here."

"Oh, is that so?" said Mr. Graham laying aside his reticence; "well, I shall be very glad to tell you all I know about the young lady, especially as I have been a little worried about her myself." He then went on to tell the whole story of the detectives' accusation, Mr. Leicester's intervention and the disappearance of both the night before.

"At first, I thought it must be an elopement," he said when he had finished, "as the pair had been going round seeing the sights together and seemed to be very friendly, from what the waiters told me. However, when I found that Mr. Leicester had left the hotel alone in a hired motor and had not taken time to take his suit case with him, I decided that was hardly likely. Probably he had found out about Miss Colquhoun's escape and started out to try to find her, seeing he must have thought he had a couple of thousand dollars at stake."

"It's a most disgraceful affair altogether," said Lady Angleside angrily; "and I think that you had no right to allow Mr. Leicester to put any girl in such an anomalous position."

She had sat silent so far but was unable to contain her indignation any longer.

Mr. Graham looked at her a moment in surprise before replying.

"Would you have had me let her go to gaol, madam?" he asked sarcastically; "because that was the alternative."

"All stuff and nonsense, man," her Ladyship replied. "Do you mean to tell me that they could send a girl of Miss Colquhoun's position to gaol on a trumpery accusation like that. A likely story indeed!" and she snorted in contempt.

"You must remember that the young lady refused to give any information as to her people, although she admitted she had lately come out from England; and she refused to give any reference outside of the farmer she was staying with at Portlake. Then she thought of Mr. Leicester. It seems rather strange that she should not have been willing to make known her relationship to yourselves, does it not?"

"As a matter of fact," put in his Lordship, "there was some slight estrangement—a mere misunderstanding—which, however, has been happily settled, I am glad to say. Miss Colquhoun is all right, Mr. Graham, you will be glad to hear; for we saw her at Portlake to-day. The girl really went right home to the people she is staying with and all this mystery was about nothing at all. I am sure we are grateful to you, Mr. Graham, for your kindness to Miss Colquhoun. Lady Angleside did not mean what she said. She is annoyed that Marjorie did not take us into her confidence. The poor girl, no doubt, was too much ashamed of the whole business."

Lady Angleside allowed herself to be silenced for the nonce; but when they had left Mr. Graham and were in the privacy of their own room, her tongue became loosened again and she spent the remainder of the evening pouring out the vials of her wrath upon the absent Marjorie. Her husband, at last, driven to desperation, made his escape to the smoking room.

CHAPTER XL

. . . . I perceived a man's glove lying on the table. My eyes encountered those of Miss Vernon, who blushed deeply.

"It is one of my relics," she said, with hesitation, replying not to my words but to my looks; "it is one of the gloves of my grandfather, the original of the superb Vandyke which you admire."

SCOTT—ROB ROY.

LADY ANGLESIDE having slept on the momentous discovery of Marjorie's name in the hotel register and the startling disclosures that followed it, arose with her mind fully made up as to the proper course for her to follow. The night had brought counsel. To tell the truth, she was still smarting under the girl's contumacy in refusing to return to her and marry Wilfrid; and she felt a certain grim satisfaction in finding her in the wrong. To do her justice, however, she was alarmed by the apparent seriousness of the situation; for the escapade had been such as she felt boded real danger to Marjorie's reputation. Her association with this man Leicester might have been innocent enough but the circumstances were certainly such as to arouse suspicion. Moreover, the latter's intimacy with Patricia was a complication that did not tend to improve matters as, if the mischief had been done, there was all the more likelihood of the scandal becoming known at home. To have it happen was bad enough; but to have it noised abroad all over England, that would be a calamity that would cause the whole family to suffer.

The first thing to be done was to see Marjorie and find

out all about it. With such a whip as this held over her head, the girl would surely come to her senses. She would see the error of her ways and submit without reserve to her Ladyship's authority. It was doubtful now whether she could permit Wilfrid to marry her; but she would, at least, try to drag her from the pitfall into which she was tending, if indeed she had not already fallen therein.

She made known her decision to Lord Angleside after breakfast when she had seen Wilfrid and Patricia safely off for the day to visit the Capilano Canyon. His Lordship, however, for once was most contrary and positively refused to go with her to see Marjorie. He said that though, of course, the incident was regrettable and Marjorie's conduct had been to say the least unconventional, he, for one, was not going to imagine anything seriously wrong in it. Marjorie, while inexperienced, had a fairly level head—she would not have made her mark at Girton if she had not—and he thought there was no real reason for alarm. This Leicester seemed a decent sort of chap; and, from what Graham had said, had acted very sensibly in the matter and saved the girl from an awkward predicament. If he had got spoony on her, he, for one, didn't blame him; and his experience was that the less other people mixed up in these affairs of the heart, the less trouble there was for everybody. The girl had been too much meddled with already in his opinion.

He growled it all out in a low monotone but quite loud enough for her Ladyship to hear. She was not used to opposition from such a quarter and it was all the more unpleasant from its unexpectedness. However, it only made her the more resolved to carry out her intentions.

"Very well," she said, "of course, if you don't care whether your ward goes wrong or not, I can't help it; but I am not going to stay silent if a word or two of

counsel and admonition will save her. I shall go right away after lunch and, if you don't come with me, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

His Lordship was not to be persuaded, however, and his wife had to go alone. She had managed to get the same chauffeur that had driven them before; and they started away about noon after an early lunch. It was about half-past two when the car drew up in front of the Boltons' cottage; and Mrs. Bolton, who was out in front attending to a hen with its brood of chickens, came forward at once, surprised and not a little perturbed by this second visitation.

"Is Miss Colquhoun at home?" asked Lady Angleside without further preliminary. The drive had been hot and tiresome and she was not feeling at all amiable.

"No, my Lady, she is not," Mrs. Bolton replied.

"Where is she then?"

"She won't be back for two or three hours, I'm afraid. She went out walking not long ago," said Mrs. Bolton.

She knew that Marjorie had gone out with Mr. Leicester, but she did not know where they were going. Marjorie had told her of her engagement the night before; but Mrs. Bolton had no mind to tell her Ladyship any more than she had to.

The latter pondered a moment. She was provoked to have come so far and find that at the end of her long journey, her wrath must remain bottled up a while longer.

"Will you go and cut some of these beautiful flowers for me?" she said to the chauffeur, pointing to a clump of fire-flowers that were growing nearby. She wanted the man out of the way and when he had gone she leaned over the side of the car.

"Do you know anything about this man, Leicester?" she asked, her fierce, grey eyes focussed sternly on Mrs.

Bolton's embarrassed visage. "I find that Marjorie has been conducting herself most disgracefully with him in Vancouver—most disgracefully!" she repeated; "and I can see by your face, woman, that you are privy to the fact. You had better tell me all you know about it at once. I'm in no mood for trifling, I can assure you."

Mrs. Bolton's distress was extreme. She did not know whether Marjorie would want her Ladyship to know about the engagement.

"I'm sure that—that there was nothing wrong in—in Miss Marjorie's conduct or in Mr. Leicester's either, my Lady. Your Ladyship is mistaken, I am sure," she stammered; but her hesitation robbed the words of their effect. Her confusion only strengthened Lady Angleside's conviction.

"How dare you lie to me; your face confirms your guilt. I shall hold you responsible, too, I tell you," she stormed. "Where does this man Leicester live? If Marjorie is not here, I shall go to see him and I shall call on my way back. I shall find out the truth about this from somebody."

Mrs. Bolton was too cowed to offer any further defence and with trembling voice, she described as well as she could to the old lady and the chauffeur, who had returned with an armful of blooms, how to find their way. Then, with a great deal of noise from the engine, the car was backed up and turned and was off again, rocking and swaying on its springs over the rough road.

It was but a short twenty minutes, in spite of their having to stop and enquire their way more than once, before the car was climbing the long hill that led up to Mr. Leicester's place. Lady Angleside had it stopped a short distance from the house and told the man to wait there for a little and then follow her. It was, in a way, a sur-

prise visit she was paying, and something prompted her that it was better to arrive as quietly as possible. If this Leicester got wind of who it was that had come to see him, he might easily go out into the woods if he wished to evade her.

Her plans for a complete surprise, however, miscarried as we have learned, because of Dick's sudden appearance on the scene mounted on Puck and because of the ruse that he adopted. It was with a glance of strong disapproval that her Ladyship had levelled her lorgnette upon the boy, for she quickly recognised him for the urchin who had behaved so unmannerly the day before. She rarely went abroad without this lorgnette of hers, partly because of her real shortsightedness, and partly because she used it as a weapon of terror by which to awe and unnerve any who should venture to dispute her will or to flout her authority. Many an incipient rebel in London drawing-rooms had wilted and drooped, fascinated before the baleful glare of that gaze like a bird before the stare of the serpent. So, the victim was held helpless until despatched by one or two stinging sentences of sarcasm or innuendo, for her Ladyship's tongue was like a rapier, as swift and as deadly.

This was the first time, however, that she had had occasion to use her armoury against an untutored child of the forest; and how was she to know that although Dick's gaze was as unfriendly as her own, the flushed and stammering urchin before her was not as cowed and submissive as he looked, and that his wits were working rapidly and his brain was cool in spite of his outward embarrassment. He knew, although his mother did not, that Marjorie was to have gone with Mr. Leicester that afternoon and was probably there in the house with him at that moment; and he felt instinctively that the old lady's visit boded some-

thing sinister for both of them and that it was desirable that they should at least be warned of her approach.

"Ah, it's the Bolton boy, isn't it?" Lady Angleside remarked with a curt nod of recognition as she lowered her lorgnette. "Is this Mr. Leicester's place?"

"Yes, ma'am," Dick replied; "but—but I don't think—he ain't at home to-day," he stammered, his eyes dropping guiltily before her searching gaze.

"How do you know?" she asked sternly, scenting a lie in the boy's confusion.

Dick squirmed uneasily in his saddle. He had been taught to tell the truth, and lying did not come natural to him. His eye, roving around in its avoidance of his inquisitor, lit upon the scare-crow down in the strawberry-patch scarcely two hundred yards away; and his mind seized upon it as a possible way out of the difficulty. Sporting one of Mr. Leicester's discarded suits and wearing his old felt hat, at that distance, it looked not so unlike him.

"Looks like him down there hoein' among the strawberries," said Dick suddenly, though there was the faintest twinkle of fun in the eyes that had before been clouded, as he pointed to the scare-crow with its loose garments fluttering faintly in the breeze. He held his breath as the lady's eyes followed the direction of his hand; and was relieved when she seemed to be satisfied and, without another word, stalked off toward it.

We shall not follow her. Suffice it to say that when she had climbed the somewhat steep ascent again and had turned in to knock at Mr. Leicester's door, if her temper had been warm before, it was now at the boiling point. When he opened the door to her, therefore, it was an angry lady that he confronted.

"How do you do, Lady Angleside," he greeted her,

taking the initiative with bland composure. "This is an unexpected pleasure."

"How do you do, Mr. Leicester. I have called to ask the favour of a few words with you," was the reply in a frigid tone.

He led her into the living-room which was now empty, Marjorie having withdrawn to the dining-room as we have seen.

"I have been round at the Bolton place to call upon my niece but found she was not at home," Lady Angleside began after a considerable pause, during which she leaned back in the armchair which Keith had offered her and fanned her heated face vigorously with a newspaper which she picked up from the table. "I thought, perhaps, I would have found her with you," she added significantly, glancing keenly at her unwilling host who had sat down opposite.

"Indeed!" the latter replied in a tone of polite but languid interest. Thanks to Dick's timely warning, he was not at all flustered; and he was aware of the importance of keeping cool. He was convinced that her Ladyship's purpose was not a friendly one.

"I was not aware," Lady Angleside went on, "when we met you at the hotel the other night, that you were acquainted with my niece, Miss Colquhoun; or that you had been compromising her in the most shameful way—in a way that no gentleman could possibly have stooped to adopt. The facts only came to the knowledge of Lord Angleside and myself last night; and I have lost no time, as you see, in coming out here to try to save the misguided and unfortunate girl from any worse folly."

"I do not know what you are talking about, I'm afraid, Lady Angleside," said Keith, startled out of his *sang froid*. There was just enough truth in the accusation to make it

rankle and the blood rushed to his face in spite of himself. The knowledge that Marjorie in the next room could not help hearing all that was said, did not tend to make him feel any more comfortable.

"Oh, you don't know, do you not?" sneered her Ladyship. "I suppose that I shall have to tell you then, shall I? Do you think it is an honourable thing to take advantage of a young girl's inexperience in the way you have done with Marjorie. You find her in an awkward position—of your own contriving for all I know—and you use it to take away her reputation. She had no business to be staying alone at the hotel in the first place; but how she could expect to save any shreds of it, eating with you in the public dining-room and, so far as I have been able to find out, going about all over the place in your company, I don't know"; and she paused for sheer lack of breath. "Whether that was the worst of it, you and she know best. No decent, modest girl would have done it and no honourable man would have allowed her to do it."

"Miss Colquhoun and I are engaged to be married," said Keith, hoping to stop the flood of indignation. He was wishing that he had allowed Marjorie to stay in the room; as her Ladyship then might have put some guard upon her words. The effect of his announcement was now the opposite of what he had hoped.

"Oho! so that's how the wind sits, is it?" she laughed, scornfully. "You've contrived it so you think she has to marry you—you're after her money—and you think that Lord Angleside and I will not wish to interfere after what has happened. You with your beggarly shack and your miserable bit of forest," and she looked contemptuously round the room. "You're nothing but an adventurer, sir, though you may be of good family for all I know."

Keith was struggling hard to control his anger. Without knowing what he was doing he had reached over for a papercutter lying on the small table beside him, and was tracing out imaginary figures with it on the arm of his chair. When, at last, he spoke, his words were quiet and his voice low and steady.

"I understood when I asked Miss Colquhoun to be my wife that she was penniless; otherwise, I should never have done so. Your remarks have been most insulting; but seeing you are a woman and Marjorie's aunt, I suppose I must pardon them as being the result of your solicitude for her. I can assure you that I thought that she had no fortune."

Lady Angleside could hardly control herself during this speech. To think that the culprit that ought to have been cringing before her should actually take up the attitude of the injured and talk to her of pardon! His very coolness and the deliberation of his words maddened her; but she must not allow her own temper to run away with her. She raised her lorgnette and stared at Keith for a moment or two, a stare of insolence; as if this were some strange freak of humanity that aroused her interest and challenged her curiosity.

"I wonder, what does the man take us for!" she asked herself aloud. "As if the Boltons didn't know all about these things. No, no, Mr. Leicester, you can hardly expect me to believe that little fiction—I won't say 'lie' for that is a word that might insult you too—might grate on your gentlemanly sensibilities——" she added sarcastically.

Keith turned white to the lips with anger but with an effort he controlled himself.

"You are, of course, very impertinent, Lady Angleside, to talk in that fashion," he said after a short pause, keeping

his voice steady with difficulty; "but if that is your opinion, far be it from me to try to alter it. It makes me have the less scruple about ignoring any claims that you might have to be consulted in connection with my marriage to Marjorie."

"Hoity-toity!" snapped out her Ladyship hardly waiting for him to finish, "you needn't put on any of your airs with me, young man. I have had to deal with people of your calibre before. This true love business is all stuff and nonsense and you need not waste time trying to talk to me about it. Lord Angleside will never consent nor shall I to your marrying Marjorie—she would simply be wasting her life. Fortunately, nobody knows her out here; and this piece of folly at the hotel, bad as it is, is not perhaps as calamitous as it might have been. When she goes back to England, we shall treat it as if it had never occurred."

"You think that with five hundred pounds a year and this ranch, that I cannot make her happy," said Keith, drumming lightly with the fingers of one hand on the arm of his chair.

"Happy, man!" she almost snorted in her contempt. "In a place like this? I should think not. But all this talking brings us nowhere. Don't you think," she suggested with a grim smile, "that seeing she is here and I have come such a long way, it would be as well to ask Marjorie to join us—she might have something to contribute to the discussion."

"How did you know?" asked Keith in no small confusion.

"Signs like that are easy to read," she replied, pointing to a tiny, green glove that lay upon the floor beside her chair. "It can hardly be a *gage d'amour* or you would surely keep it in a more honourable place."

"As a matter of fact I asked her to withdraw to the next room when I found that I had a visitor," said Keith trying to conceal his embarrassment but flushing in spite of himself.

There was no reason, however, now, why the two should not meet, he reflected. It would put an end, at least, to an almost intolerable situation. How much Marjorie must have heard of their conversation he was unable to guess, but he feared the worst. He hoped that she would have been able to take the matter sensibly, but, knowing her pride and high spirit, he had grave doubts. So, it was with some considerable trepidation, that he rose and pulled back the sliding door. The dining-room was empty.

"I'm afraid she is gone," said Keith much troubled.

"She must have overheard what I said about her. Well, it served her right and it was all true," Lady Angleside remarked.

Keith paid no heed to her; but passed out into the kitchen to see if she had escaped by the back way as he felt sure that she could not have gone by the front door without his knowing. He was surprised to find Lady Angleside's chauffeur seated at the kitchen table and enjoying a cup of tea while Mrs. Dalrymple was standing by the stove evidently entertaining him with her conversation.

"Did Miss Colquhoun pass out this way?" he asked her, without stopping to consider the cause of the man's presence there. Mrs. Dalrymple was not wont to dispense her master's hospitality unauthorised.

"She went out just a minute or two ago, sir," she replied, "and she asked me to give this gentleman a cup of tea."

"The young lady told me to come in herself, sir," the

man volunteered. "I think that you may find her outside there."

Without another word, Keith passed outside and looked all around but there was no Marjorie to be seen. Strange to say, there was no motor either although, looking down, he saw the marks of the wheels of one in the soft dust of the road where it seemed to have been backed up and turned around. Then he glanced down the road and, right at the foot of the hill nearly a mile away, he caught a fleeting glimpse of a car as it turned the corner to cross the bridge and close behind it, there followed at the gallop, a small figure on a bright bay horse.

For the second time in the course of this chronicle, Keith's tongue was betrayed into an indiscretion.

"She's off with the old woman's car and taken Dick with her!" he exclaimed. "Plague take her scandalous tongue! Now if here isn't the mischief to pay."

CHAPTER XLI

The maid behind the arras,
She durst not chuse but hear;
And ev'ry harsh envenomed word
Was torture in her ear.

OLD BALLAD.

IT had been a great surprise to Marjorie to hear the news of Lady Angleside's return to the district after she had taken such an angry and final farewell the day before; and her heart was beating fast when she heard the familiar voice as Keith ushered the old lady into the adjoining room. In the excitement of the moment, she had consented to Keith's suggestion for her to step into the dining-room until her Ladyship should depart again; and she had no sooner done so than she was sorry for it. Anything underhand was abhorrent to her and she realised at once that it would have been better to confront her Ladyship at the first. There was absolutely nothing wrong in her visiting Keith; but the moment that there was any appearance of concealment of her being there, the fact of her presence was open to misconstruction. It was too late now, however, to rectify the mistake so she sat down in a chair and tried to compose her feelings.

She found that it was impossible to avoid hearing all that was said, however; she might just as well have been in the same room with them, the sound of the voices travelled so distinctly through the light doors, Lady Angleside's harsh and resonant, Keith's low but distinct with his crisp and even enunciation.

At first, what she heard moved her to indignation but soon, as the old lady warmed to her subject, that feeling changed to one of horror and shame.

"She had no business to be staying alone in the hotel in the first place; but how she could expect to save any shreds of it, eating with you in the public dining-room, and, so far as I have been able to find out, going about all over the place in your company, I don't know. Whether that was the worst of it, you and she know best. No decent, modest girl would have done it and no honourable man would have allowed her to do it. . . . You've contrived it so you think she has to marry you—you're after her money——"

The words burned themselves into her consciousness and scarcely knowing what she was doing she put her hands to her ears and rushed out through the kitchen, much to the astonishment of Mrs. Dalrymple, who was baking bread. She had been aware of a certain Bohemianism about her association with Keith in Vancouver—a certain piquant unconventionality—and that was all; but Lady Angleside's scathing words of condemnation placed the matter in a totally different light. In England, she had always been so shielded—her mind had been centred on her studies at Girton and her pleasures had been mainly such wholesome and natural diversions as are common to English country life. The seamy side of society and of the relations between the sexes had never obtruded themselves on her; and with the back-biting, scandal-mongering Mrs. Grundy she had hardly even a bowing acquaintance. To find that her aunt considered that she had sinned unpardonably against society's unwritten canons, filled her whole being with horror and shame. The accusation against Keith that he had knowingly enticed her into this error in order that he might force

her to marry him and so get her money, she had hardly comprehended, the whole thing had come upon her so suddenly. That fell into the background behind the awful feeling that she had disgraced herself by conduct that, at the least, her aunt had stigmatised as immodest and unwomanly; but the sinister suggestion of it remained in her consciousness to rankle and to sting.

When she got outside, the sight of the chauffeur sitting in the motor chatting to Dick, who was allowing his pony to crop the grass at the side of the road, brought her to herself again. The boy came over joyously to speak to her, anxious to hear what might be the old lady's mission; but when he saw her face, he realised quickly that something terrible had happened.

"Is she going to take you back with her?" he asked breathless with anxiety. This was perhaps the worst possibility that could occur to him.

"No, Dicky; it's not that, anyway," she said, her eyes bright with a dew of unshed tears as she reflected that here was one true heart, at least, that she could rely upon whatever happened. This stain upon her honour seemed to stand as a bar between her and Keith, whether he were true, or whether he were false as her aunt would make out. Her one engrossing desire was now to get away from them all, away to think this thing over for herself.

The thought came to her, too, that this was her birthday, the day that she was to come of age when she would be her own mistress. She would go back to Vancouver to her guardian who, after his fashion, had always been good to her; and she would, at least, get his counsel and advice.

If she could only go to him now when her aunt was away, she felt that she could depend on a sympathetic

reception. As her eyes fell again on the car, a daring idea came into her head which she at once proceeded to act upon.

"Go in to Mrs. Dalrymple, Dick," she said, "and tell her I said that she is to give the chauffeur a cup of tea as he has come all the way from town. I shall send him in. Then you come right back to me."

The boy started to obey without question and Marjorie sauntered leisurely over to the car.

"You must be thirsty after your hot ride," she said to the chauffeur with that air of kindly charm that was innate with her. "If you will go into the kitchen, you will get a cup of tea. It will be some time yet before Lady Angleside will be ready."

The man, nothing loath, touched his cap and went towards the house. Dicky, by this time, had returned having delivered his message to Mrs. Dalrymple, who had hastened to obey the young lady's order.

"Dicky," said Marjorie solemnly, "something has happened that makes it necessary for me to go to Vancouver this afternoon; and I am going to run away with Lady Angleside's car. Will you go with me, for I don't want to go alone? I want you to go and be my knight, you know."

Dick opened his hazel eyes to their widest capacity. This was something altogether beyond his comprehension.

"Gee!" he exclaimed; "but who's going to drive? Won't the old lady be mad?"

"I'm going to drive myself. I've often driven a car. Will you go with me?"

"Sure, course I will," he cried gleefully, proud of the honour; but his face fell again. "What about Mr. Leicester, though?" he asked.

"Oh, we'll have to leave him behind, Dick. You mustn't ask any questions," she said anticipating his eager words. "The knight must be content to do as his lady bids him, you know, without question or scruple. I want you to bring Puck and get some one at the village to take him home for you with a note to your mother to let her know where we have gone. Then you'll come with me in the car and we'll be in town in no time almost. Get your horse now and follow me as fast as you can because that man might come out any minute."

Without further delay, she jumped into the car and was soon steering it carefully down the hill over the rough road closely followed by Dick on his bay horse. The motion of the car joined with the close attention required to keep it upon the road and the wind fanning her cheek, brought momentary surcease, at least, from the torture of her thoughts; and she felt no qualms of remorse for the discomfiture of the chauffeur or the wrath of his mistress when they should discover their abandonment. As to the lover left behind as well there was perhaps some scruple; but it was altogether overborne in the sense of her shame. She rejoiced in every mile that took her farther from him.

CHAPTER XLII

Post equitem sedet atra cura.

HORACE.

"I am quite my own master, agreeably lodged, perfectly easy in my circumstances. I am content with my situation, and happy because I think myself so."

LE SAGE—GIL BLAS.

As soon as Keith realised that Majorie had fled, he decided to follow her, at once, and try to efface the harm that had been done by Lady Angleside's shrewish tongue. He was at no loss to estimate the girl's state of mind and he felt very sure that she had not taken possession of the car merely to take her home to Bolton's. Her impulse he felt sure would be to fly as far and as fast as she could. Vancouver, therefore, he argued, would be her immediate destination; and it behooved him to follow her immediately.

So, taking no thought of Lady Angleside sitting patiently in his den, he rushed off to the barn to harness the team. Dalrymple was out in the field so he had to do it alone but it was the work of only a few minutes; and he was just driving out of the corral gate when Lady Angleside and her chauffeur rushed out and stopped him. The latter had soon discovered the disappearance of his car and he was not long in making Lady Angleside acquainted with the news of it. Straightway, she had rushed from the house like a whirlwind. Her bonnet had fallen away in her excitement; and her features showed a

curious mixture of wrath and dismay as she came forward to the side of the democrat at a pace that was very different from her usual stately stride.

"That dreadful girl has stolen my motor," she gasped in a tone of helpless indignation, taking hold of the wheel partly to steady herself and partly to prevent Keith from driving away from her. "There seems to be no limit to her shameless audacity."

"You have yourself to thank," said Keith grimly. "She heard every word you said, madam, and to my mind, it is no wonder she took any means she could to get away from you. Will you kindly let go, as I am in a hurry," he said coldly polite, as the horses, sensing his impatience through the lines, fretted to be off.

"I'm going with you," said Lady Angleside. "Do you think I'm going to be left alone here? Help me up, chauffeur," she said to the man curtly.

"You can't come with me, madam," said Keith; "for I shall have to drive very fast, and it wouldn't be safe for you. My man, Dalrymple, will see that you are driven to the station somehow, and you can get home on the train."

"I'm going, I tell you," was all her reply, taking hold of the seat with grim determination and putting one foot on the hub of the wheel. The chauffeur gave her a hoist from behind, and Keith could do no less than steady her as she mounted beside him. The chauffeur would have jumped in behind; but the horses were off with a rush and he lacked the determination to make a run for it. The fellow looked none too hospitable, he reflected, and while it might be all right for the lady to force her company on him, he himself was not so anxious for the ride as to do so. It was a rum business altogether and he would have to be pretty well paid for it all, even if he did get his car

back again safe and sound, which he felt was more or less doubtful.

Meanwhile, the horses were flying down the hill at such a pace as they had never been allowed to traverse it at before and the wagon bumped and swayed over the rough road in a manner most alarming, especially to one like Lady Angleside to whom such roads and such a vehicle were altogether strange. Round the sharp curves they went on the narrow grade, the hind wheels sliding and groaning and seeming to keep the road only by some strange miracle as they dashed along. Lady Angleside's face was pale but she held on fast to the seat with the one hand and with the other she clung to the arm of the driver, who was forced to put forth every exertion to keep control of his horses. They simply tore over the long, wooden bridge across the canyon and to save their wind, Keith had to pull them to a walk climbing the steep ascent on the other side. As soon, as they reached the summit, however, he gave them the whip again and they were off at the gallop; and they kept this pace practically all the way to the village. One of the rear springs had broken in the first rush down the hill and it rapped continuously with a loud clatter against the body of the wagon; but the driver paid no attention to it, keeping his eyes steadily on the horses and the road before him.

Lady Angleside had at first been thoroughly terrified, expecting every moment to be dashed over the grade. She would have protested; but for the first time in her life, perhaps, as she looked at Keith's grim countenance and marked the square set of his jaw, she found she was lacking in the courage to assert herself. Here, was a man, she saw, who did not mind her anger—who had actually dared to express his condemnation; and in spite of herself, she could not get away from a feeling of guiltiness

towards him. Several times she had almost nerved herself to launch forth in a tirade of indignant protest at his treatment and, always, this feeling stayed her words. She could not help a feeling of admiration from creeping in, as well; admiration for his masterfulness and his determination.

At Portlake he pulled up the foam-covered horses at the blacksmith's shop, amid the curious stares of a number of the usual hangers-on around the village. A Ford car, the property of the smith, stood in the road in front of the door.

"I want to borrow your car, Jim," he said to the latter after he had helped Lady Angleside to get down. Jim was carefully adjusting a red-hot shoe on the sizzling hoof of a farm horse.

"Help yourself," was the reply after a brief glance of inquiry.

"Is there plenty of juice aboard?"

"I just put in a can not half an hour ago."

"Put my team up, will you, like a good fellow; and rub them down a bit."

"Looks like you've been drivin' 'em pretty hard," the smith remarked when he had straightened his back.

"Just a minute, Jim," said Keith taking the man aside for a moment. "Was there a young lady passed through here a short time ago in a big touring car?"

"You bet, there was, Mr. Leicester," said the man with a grin. "It was Miss Coon, too, the young woman that stays up to Bolton's place. She took Dick Bolton with her in the car and he sent his horse home with Tim Wallace. What's up, I wonder?"

"I want to catch up with them that's all," said Keith perplexed by all this publicity. "I—er—have a message to give the young lady."

"Oh, I see," said the man; but his tone implied strongly that he didn't see. However, Keith wasted no time in enlightening him but turned round to go to the Ford. What was his surprise to see that her ladyship was already seated in it.

"I can't take you any farther with me, Lady Angleside, I'm sorry," he said as soon as he had taken in the situation. A reconciliation with Marjorie would be impossible if she went along with him. "You had better take the train," he suggested.

"Oh, not at all," Lady Angleside replied with composure, although, had she realised it, the disarray of her headgear took away from the dignity of her appearance. "There has been quite enough goings-on without a chaperon, as it is. Besides you will remember it is my car that has been run away with."

Their eyes met in a steady stare of mutual defiance for a short space. Then Lady Angleside's grim features broke into a smile.

"I'm here now, you know, and you can't very well put me out. You're losing time, too," she said.

Keith muttered something under his breath as he cranked the car and jumped in; and they were soon speeding down the road towards Vancouver at a speed of thirty miles an hour, the old Ford tearing along up and down hill like a thing possessed. Its driver knew that there was only, at best, an even chance that he might catch Marjorie with the start that she had if she drove at all speedily, so he spared neither the car nor his grim-faced passenger. Some narrow escapes they had from imminent destruction. Dogs from wayside farmhouses greeted them with frantic barkings and chased them until exhausted; and numerous chickens looked death in the face as they flew from under the wheels of the little Ford. White-bearded farmers, as

they pulled their teams close into the roadside to give as wide a berth as possible to its reckless driver, swore loudly as he passed them by in a cloud of dust. Lady Angleside, for all her portly size, bounced about like a rubber ball in the rear seat but with no further complaint than an occasional grunt as some jolt worse than usual set her down with a specially hard bump on the Ford's none too luxurious cushions. In spite of all the discomforts she was suffering, Keith, had he been able to turn round to look at her, might have been surprised to see that her expression had lost its severity; that, as she braced herself as tightly as she could in the corner of the car, she seemed to smile in satisfaction as if she was thoroughly enjoying herself although the smile was often chastened to a grimace of pain. Indeed, the old lady was entering enthusiastically into the excitement of the chase and her eyes were strained as eagerly as Keith's into the distance ahead of them for a sight of the runaways. Could he have forced the little car even faster yet, she would not have gainsaid him.

It was not until they had entered the wide stretch of the Pitt Meadows where the road runs for miles on the dead level with one or two turns at right angles before it reaches the Pitt River that their eyes were rewarded with the sight of a long streak of white dust in the distance ahead of them. It was an auto, they could tell, but it was too far away to be able to distinguish the occupants; and it seemed to be going at a fast rate of speed. That it contained Marjorie was most likely. Fast as they were going, however, they did not seem to be gaining on it and as they turned the corner of the last stretch of road going to the ferry, they could see that the other auto had just topped the high bank of the river, ere it disappeared from sight over the rise.

"We're almost sure to catch her at the ferry," shouted Keith, forgetting for a moment in his excitement the strained relations existing between himself and his passenger; "there's nearly always a long delay in getting across."

His expectation was short-lived, however, for when about three minutes later, he topped the rise of the bank himself and looked down along the wooden wharf arrangement leading down to the water, there was the little square scow half-way across the stream, its gasoline engine chug-chugging away bravely and Marjorie and Dick standing on its deck beside the stolen Packard. The ferryman was invisible, no doubt down beside his engine, and although Keith shouted and waved, his efforts were useless. A sad, little wave of farewell from each was all the reply that he got. He could not help thinking of his crossing with Marjorie but two nights before. How different everything had been then and how much seemed to have happened since. He was still hopeful that everything could be satisfactorily arranged even yet if only he could get a few minutes' talk with her. However, he was aware that there was no chance of his catching her now before she reached the city as it would be at least half an hour before the ferryman would deign to return for them. It was too provoking, to have missed it by such a narrow margin. He watched the receding scow until it landed and he saw the auto go up the other side and callously drive away. He had had a sneaking hope that Marjorie might relent and wait for them; but this was soon doomed to disappointment.

Then he turned to his companion and he was touched by a pang of compunction as he looked at her dishevelled hair, her bonnet hanging back on her head and as he noted the tired look upon her face. The excitement, so

far, had kept her up; but now that the chase was lost and the tension relaxed, she was feeling the reaction.

"I'm afraid that I have given you a terrible jolting," he said in a tone of solicitude. "I am very sorry."

She smiled faintly.

"I do feel a bit shaken up," she admitted; "but I wouldn't have minded if we had caught her. However, it wasn't your fault that we didn't. You might have made it if I hadn't delayed you. I suppose there's no chance of catching her now."

"Not the least," Keith replied with a shake of his head, "unless she were to burst a tire or have some kind of a breakdown. It mightn't be any better if we did catch her after what you told her," he continued gloomily. "Likely as not she will refuse to speak to me. Confound the fellow!" he exclaimed angrily, looking across to the other side where the ferryman could be seen moving around on the bank; "why doesn't he come over and get us?"

He hallooed lustily but his voice seemed hopelessly feeble to cross the wide expanse of the river; and he soon realised that it was no use to try to attract the man's attention that way. Lady Angleside, after eagerly watching the results of his efforts, now stood up in the car and waved frantically and would have made a curious picture for any chance onlooker, with her hair flying out from under her rebellious bonnet and her sable-hued draperies round her Amazonian figure fluttering in the afternoon breeze. Boadicea, standing in her chariot inciting her ravaged Britons to revenge, could hardly have presented any more striking or commanding figure. However, all her efforts, too, appeared to be without avail. Exhausted, she soon sat down again and turned to Keith a face that was full of vexation and chagrin.

"Don't worry," he said soothingly; "we might as well possess our souls in patience; for we shall never catch them now. Funny, isn't it," he went on with an amused laugh. "Here we are, you and I, leagued together for a certain purpose and conversing amicably when we should hardly be speaking to each other. Your object is to defeat the dearest desire of my heart and I suppose mine is, to defeat the dearest desire of yours. Why I should have let you come with me is more than my poor wits can explain."

She looked at him for a moment with a curious expression which finally softened into a smile.

"It was because you couldn't help yourself, that's all," she replied.

"Now, after all, seeing we have some time on our hands," he asked, "what is your particular objection to me as a husband for Marjorie, looking at the matter impartially, you know, and putting your own son's pretensions out of the question?"

He had sat down at the side of the car on a box turned up on its end and was looking quizzically up at her.

"Oh, no particular one, I can assure you," she returned with a twinkle of malice in her eye. "I find you generally objectionable."

He made a gesture of mock despair.

"You score, my dear lady; but let us descend to details, if you please. I suppose, first of all, I am not rich enough."

"No, you are not rich enough to be a match for a girl with a fortune such as she will have in her own right. For that matter, Wilfrid is poor according to his rank; but his rank itself is sufficient to offset her money,"—it was too much to expect of the worthy lady to leave her son out of the discussion,—"and you—" she went on con-

temptuously, "you have neither the money nor the rank."

"Come now," said Keith reproachfully, "you must be fair with me, you know. It's true that I am only Mister as she is only Miss and it would be an ungrateful task surely for me to have to blow the trumpet for my poor ancestors. Who and what they were, is it not written in the book of the Peerage, which is I suppose to the British aristocracy what Chronicles was to the ancient Israelites? Naïve and childlike people, both of them," he remarked reflectively, but with an apprehensive glance that took in the shade of resentment just beginning to becloud her ladyship's brow. "And as for money," he went on, hastening to skirt clear of the thin ice of a dangerous subject, "why, for my position and way of life, with five hundred pounds and my hundred acres free of encumbrance, I am a veritable Crœsus."

Lady Angleside snorted indignantly.

"Position," she cried, "a mere rancher toiling and sweating like a hind. My son will some day be Lord-Lieutenant of the County."

"My dear lady," protested Keith with a sort of humorous despair. "Why will you bring your son into the argument? Don't you see how much more ungrateful it makes my task. It's bad enough to have to urge my own merits without having to set them against his. Now, you say 'a mere rancher'; but you are quite wrong. On the contrary, I am one of the councillors ruling the affairs of this municipality and they are even now asking me to run for Reeve next year. It is larger than many an English county, being about twenty miles from east to west and from the Fraser to the wilderness North to South. I am a Justice of the Peace and Police Commissioner for the district. It's true," he added with a deprecatory laugh, "the police force consists of only one and he performs the

duties of local pound-keeper as well; but that only speaks the more highly for the law-abiding qualities of the people."

"That may be so," Lady Angleside admitted rather grudgingly, somewhat impressed in spite of herself; "but it is a barbarous country at best. It might be all right for a man, but for a girl brought up as Marjorie has been to be happy in it, why it is simply impossible! With all her money, why should she bury herself in a place like this?" she said in a tone of aggrieved wonder.

"Why, indeed?" agreed Keith, "unless perhaps, she cared enough for a fellow to do so."

"But, of course," Lady Angleside remarked in a tone of disdain, "there would be no need for either of you to remain in this country. You would go home and settle with her on her money—buy an estate somewhere in England and your local pound-keeper would have to find somebody else to superintend him," and a scornful smile flitted across her features.

"No, indeed, I would never think of such a thing," said Keith emphatically, "no matter how rich my wife would be. This country is good enough for me and I want to have my small part in its development."

"Ah, so you declare now; but you would find that your wife would have something to say on that score," retorted Lady Angleside.

"I would never marry a girl who would not be satisfied to stay here with me," said Keith.

"You'll never marry Marjorie then, young man," she replied nodding her head portentously.

"We shall wait and see," was his brief response.

Nothing further was said on the subject, for the ferryman was seen bestirring himself on the other side and

soon sundry coughings of the engine and sundry grindings from the wire cable followed by the steady chug-chug when the craft was once under way, announced that there would soon be an end to their waiting.

CHAPTER XLIII

CLOWN. *Ay, and spite of all that could be said or done, she vowed she'd take him an' that was the end o't.*
CYRIL. *And prithee, how did it all come about?*
CLOWN. *Oh, faith, the usual way. That pert boy ydept Cupid put a finger in the pie and the rest followed.*

OLD PLAY.

LORD ANGLESIDE had just finished dressing for dinner and was enjoying a cigarette in his private sitting-room before going down. His wife had been away most of the day so that he had been free to do as he liked and he was feeling in a particularly good humour when there came a knock at the door and in answer to his "Come in," Marjorie entered the room.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed in surprise as he rose to greet her, "my dear girl, I am glad to see you."

"You dear old Uncle!" exclaimed Marjorie with a mist of tears in her eyes as she put her arms about his neck and kissed him, greatly moved by the heartiness of his welcome. "I do believe you really are glad to see me."

"There, there, there, why of course I am," he replied patting her shoulder affectionately. "I'm just as fond of you as ever though you did run away from me and lead us all such a dance. But whatever have you done with your aunt? I thought she went off to see you and give you a scolding."

"So she did, you know; but I ran away with her motor and left her. I couldn't help it, really," she said, the

sparkle dying out of her eyes and a hot flush of painful memory kindling in her cheeks.

The old peer's face meanwhile was a study, apprehension, astonishment and amusement all struggling for expression at the same time, as he tried to grasp the meaning of his ward's confession. The vision of Lady Angleside left stranded in some lonely wood while Marjorie ran off in her motor was such as almost to stagger belief. It came to him with just such a shock as the news of some startling case of *lèse majesté* against his monarch might have caused him. Then the humorous side of it struck him and the beginning of a smile puckered up one side of his mouth.

"Wh-wha-a-a-t, you don't say so? impossible!" he exclaimed.

"No, it's quite true," she assured him lifting her head with a pretty, little air of spirit; but quickly lowering it again in humility. "She was saying such terrible things about me to Mr. Leicester and I just couldn't stand it, so I ran away to you."

The note of appeal in her voice swept away any lingering hesitation that his Lordship might have had and from that moment he was her firm partisan.

"Sit down, my dear, and tell me all about it; and then we'll go down to dinner together. If you have left your poor aunt out in the wilds, I don't suppose there's any need to wait for her."

"Oh, but she's right behind me," Marjorie declared excitedly, "and Mr. Leicester, too; and they mustn't know I've been here. They just missed catching me at the ferry but we got on board just in time. We saw them plainly on the wharf and Auntie waved for us to come back—little Dicky Bolton came with me—but we never paid any heed."

"By Jove, no, did you though!" exclaimed his Lordship in delight and admiration, enthused out of his customary drawl; "I'd have given a couple of ponies to have seen it. But you must tell me the whole story from the beginning. We mustn't lose any time either, for they might be here any moment."

"I left Dicky on watch," Marjorie continued still somewhat breathless. "He's to get one of the page-boys to bring him up as soon as they arrive; and that will give me time to get away before they come up. He has never been in such a place as this in his life before; but he has his wits about him all the same."

Pausing for a moment, she sat down on a stool beside her guardian's chair and with some faltering at times and many blushes, she told him the day's history.

"O-ho, so that's how the affair stands, is it?" he said when she had finished. "You went and became engaged to this chap, Leicester, without asking your guardian's consent; and now you want to send him about his business."

"I never wish to see him again," she said passionately. "I do not believe all that Aunt Sophronia said to him but I don't want to see him again."

Lord Angleside looked at her with a faint smile of amusement.

"Ah, you think that he's after you for your money, of course," he remarked blandly, twisting his moustache. He was anxious to find out the real nature of the girl's feeling for the man and he was not unskilful in probing into the subtleties of feminine character. Of the inefficacy of direct questioning in a case of this kind, he was fully aware.

"After my money!" the girl replied indignantly. "No,

he's not that kind. He wouldn't have asked me if he had known I have money."

"Ah, indeed," drawled his Lordship, half closing his eyes and lightly drumming with his fingers on the arm of his chair. "Then what you feel is that—ah, that ah—he took advantage of your inexperience and your predicament with these detectives—a rather awkward one certainly,"—here he chuckled silently to himself behind his ward's back— "to compromise you with his attentions, as your aunt says, to entrap you into marriage with him. A shameful thing to do!" he exclaimed with a finely simulated wrath; "and he nothing but a rancher, a regular undesirable as your aunt would say, and not fit to associate with people of our class."

"I don't feel anything of the sort," said Marjorie turning round so as to face him, her eyes flashing finely; "and I am ashamed of you to suggest such a thing, Uncle Reggie. You're every bit as bad as Auntie. Mr. Leicester behaved perfectly honourably throughout, and he's not an undesirable. He is a gentleman just as much as you are."

"Oh, indeed, is that so?" said his Lordship again with a twinkle in his eye. "Well, my dear, if you feel that way about him and have promised to marry him—of course, it was without your guardian's consent and you might ah—if you chose—allege that as an excuse for, ah—withdrawing from it—why do you want to run away from him?" and he leaned back in his chair with a smile.

Marjorie lowered her head in some confusion; but her reply was made unnecessary by the tumultuous entrance of Lady Angleside and Mr. Leicester, followed by a very crestfallen Dicky who, stationed at the main entrance, had been quick to mark the approach of the enemy; but not quick enough to escape the keen eye of Mr. Leicester

who had captured him at the elevator before he could reach Marjorie to give the alarm.

"So, she's here, is she?" Lady Angleside said grimly to her husband without further greeting. "What have you got to say for yourself, miss?" she continued, turning to Marjorie, who had risen and stood facing her. "You seem to have learned a great many things since you came to this country, grand larceny being one of them. Your detectives, it seems to me, were not so far wrong when they wanted to arrest you for thieving." There was a twinkle in her ladyship's eye, however, and a certain humorous twist on her features, indicating to one who knew her well that her words were not wholly in earnest.

Lord Angleside, noting this, discreetly remained silent. It was a theory with him that, in arguing with the other sex, the advantage lay with the one who was most sparing of speech. He had bowed to Keith on his entrance and offered him a chair; but the latter still remained standing. Less experienced than the older man and eager to champion the girl, he hastened to thrust himself into the argument.

"If Marjorie ran away with your car, you certainly took possession of mine, Lady Angleside," he said with his most winning smile, "and if Marjorie's crime was grand larceny, I think that yours was a species of highway robbery which is ranked in the eyes of the law as the graver charge. I am sure, though, that I bear no malice and your Ladyship could hardly be less generous."

"You forced me to do as I did," said Marjorie standing white and defiant over against the window. "You had no right to say those horrible things about me; and I don't want ever to see you again—or—Mr. Leicester either," she added with a slight catch in her voice.

"You have no right to blame me, Marjorie," said Keith;

"I have done nothing that I know of that should change your opinion of me or to make you run away from me. You have promised to marry me and surely, after that, you would not let a few ridiculous words, spoken by your aunt in the heat of the moment, come between us," and he moved towards her but with a quick gesture she warned him away.

"You may call them 'a few ridiculous words,' sir," she broke out passionately, "but true or not, they were such as to cover me with horror and shame."

The sting of her outraged pride, the pain of her rude awakening from love's first, delicious idyll and the bitterness of her tumultuous reflections of the last three hours, all combined to raise her out of her usual poise and self-control and to make her strike out with the natural instinct of a wounded creature to return hurt for hurt.

"I quite understand how you feel about it, Marjorie," said Keith soothingly; "but you exaggerate the whole matter. I'm sure Lady Angleside is very sorry herself about it."

"Well, perhaps I did say a little more than I really meant, Marjorie," said Lady Angleside, moved a little by the girl's distress; "but I still hold to my opinion that Mr. Leicester is after you for your money. I have had a lot of experience with penniless suitors like him before; and I know the breed."

"Tut, tut, Sophy," his Lordship remonstrated, feeling that his wife was going too far. "You should be careful how you say such things."

Keith had altered the pose of his head slightly so that his chin became a shade more prominent and he smiled; but it was a smile that was mirthless and cold.

"I am not so much concerned about your opinion of my motives, Lady Angleside; but if you are of the same

mind, Marjorie, of course, there is nothing left for me but to say 'good-bye.' Otherwise, I should hold you to your promise. I thought that you had nothing when I asked you to marry me. If you do not believe me you must say so and that will end the matter."

He spoke with deliberation and a trifle huskily and his heart seemed to be making such a disturbance within his breast as came well nigh to choking him. He had eyes only for Marjorie whose gaze was averted; but the rich flood of colour in her face bore witness to the strength of her emotions. There was a space of silence that was painful to all. Lady Angleside still stood turning from one to the other, grim and forbidding, and the humorous twist had long ago disappeared from her features. Her husband took refuge in blowing his nose which he did with the startling effect of a trumpet blast. His wife seemed to be always involving him in unpleasant scenes and he was feeling very sore about it. There seemed to be so little justification for it all, too, he was reflecting.

Marjorie kept her eyes on the carpet as long as she was able; but there seemed to be some power of attraction that forced her quite against her will to meet Keith's at last. She was vexed with herself for her petulance and she felt that he must be despising her. In a sort of sub-conscious way, she was aware, too, of Dick's reproachful presence, Dick who was so loyal to both. However, when she finally met Keith's gaze she could see nothing of contempt or anger, nothing to bear out the sternness of his words. Rather was it full of trust and appeal; and the mist that had beclouded her understanding was suddenly dispelled and she knew that it would be impossible for her again to let any doubt or misunderstanding come between them.

"Of course, I believe you, Keith," she said at last; and there was that in her tone and her smile that took him to

her side. With one hand in hers and the other on her shoulder, he turned to Lord Angleside.

"That being the case, Lord Angleside," he said with a smile and a faint inclination, "I beg to request the hand of your ward in marriage."

"By Jove, my boy," Lord Angleside replied, twisting the end of his moustache and contorting his face in a vain effort to suppress the smile that would make its appearance. "It seems to me that you've taken it already and there's nothing left for me but to give you my blessing, eh, Sophy? As a matter of fact, I believe this, being my ward's twenty-first birthday, marks the end of my guardianship; and she seems to have taken her fate in her own hands, though she was of quite the contrary intention when she came in first—you needn't blush so furiously about it, Marjorie. I seem to be working overtime as the fond parent this afternoon though. It's not an hour since I was asked to give my blessing to Wilfrid and Miss Devereux; and incidentally to break the news to you, Sophy."

Lady Angleside had been controlling her emotions with the greatest difficulty during this harangue in which she found herself taking such a subordinate place; and when her husband disclosed the last piece of news in such an off-hand manner, she was fairly dumbfounded though she was not altogether unprepared for it, to tell the truth.

"Wilfrid and Miss Devereux!" she gasped and then she rallied from the shock bravely. "Well, I am not surprised. Indeed, I may say I have been expecting it; and I am sure she will suit him very much better than Marjorie would have done. There is one point I must insist upon with Mr. Leicester, however, Reginald, and I trust you will as well—and I hope that our wishes will be considered in some degree, at least, considering the care and

affection that we have lavished on Marjorie all these years —that is, that they come home to live in England. It is only fair to Marjorie when her father left her so well provided for that she should reap the benefit."

"Ah, to be sure, of course," assented Lord Angleside rubbing his hands together. "They would never think of living out here with all that money—over ninety thousand pounds and all well invested. We should have to make that a condition, I think, Leicester, you know."

Lady Angleside looked over triumphantly at Keith. She had placed him between the devil and the deep sea. If he refused to accept the condition, no doubt, Marjorie would be offended and her husband also; if he did accept it, he would have to eat his own words of an hour ago.

There was another portentous silence for a brief space.

"That is a condition that my manhood would not allow me to accept, Lord Angleside," said Keith after a moment's reflection. "I have taken up a certain work here—no doubt, a very humble and unimportant one to you—but not so to me. It is a worthy work and I could not lay it aside to live on my wife's money no matter how much it was. I am sure Marjorie would feel that I was right, too. However, if she thinks the rough-and-ready life of the West—the lack of the veneer that belongs to an older civilisation—means too much of a sacrifice for her to make —I should be the last to ask her to remain here at the expense of her happiness. I have thrown in my fortune with the West and I cannot draw back. My wife must be my partner in the enterprise," and he looked down fondly at Marjorie.

"Aw, is that so? And what does Marjorie say?" asked Lord Angleside in his lazy drawl, glancing keenly from one to the other.

"My place is with my husband, of course," said Marjorie simply, meeting Keith's look with a tender smile. "Besides," she added softly, "I love the West, too."

Lord Angleside turned to his wife.

"You see it's no use, Sophy, we old folks might as well keep our fingers out of the pie. You have the right stuff in you, Leicester, my boy," he said, shaking Keith heartily by the hand, "and I think that you'll do very well even if you aren't loaded down with money-bags. Marjorie's a sensible girl, no society nonsense about her—and if you only hold her with a light rein, you'll manage her all right. You're a lucky fellow to get her," and drawing the girl to him he kissed her on both cheeks. "Now, Sophy, it's your turn to act handsomely," he added turning to his wife.

"Well, at least, it will be a relief to get Marjorie off my hands," said her Ladyship. "One never knows what she will do next," and she kissed her not unkindly. "As for you, Mr. Leicester, I've felt more respect for you since I saw the rate you could drive a Ford car with two flat tires. I'm sure it will be some time before I recover from the shaking up I've had to-day. All the same, I wish you both a great deal of happiness," and she shook hands heartily with Keith.

"And what about you, Dicky?" asked Marjorie going over to Dick who, in an agony of shyness, was trying to efface himself in a corner and kissing him, much to his further discomfiture.

"Ah, you little traitor," said Keith shaking his finger at him. "What do you mean by aiding and abetting Marjorie in rebellion the way you did?"

Dicky was bathed in an agony of blushes when he found himself the centre of interest; but a gleam of mischief twinkled in his eyes.

"I was tryin' to play Shivalree," he declared, glancing slyly at Marjorie, "to a maiden in distress—you know—you know, like the guy you told me about, that she said was dead."

"Shake hands on it, Dicky," said Keith enthusiastically; "and you were quite right, you little trump."

"And I take it all back about him being dead, Dicky dear," said Marjorie earnestly. "He will never be dead so long as there are boys like you and Keith to keep him alive."

"Well, suppose we go down to dinner," suggested Lord Angleside, who was beginning to feel slightly bored by so much sentiment. "Sophy, you and I must lead the way and let these lovers follow."

"Do you know the happy thought that strikes me, Marjorie?" said Keith as they passed out into the hall behind Lord and Lady Angleside with Dick half a pace in front of them. "There'll be a moon to-night again on English Bay and, as soon as dinner is over, we shall go down and launch our little canoe. Only, this time," he added, patting the boy's head, "we shall take our wingless Cupid with us in the prow, even if we have to blindfold him and seal his ears with wax."

THE END.

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